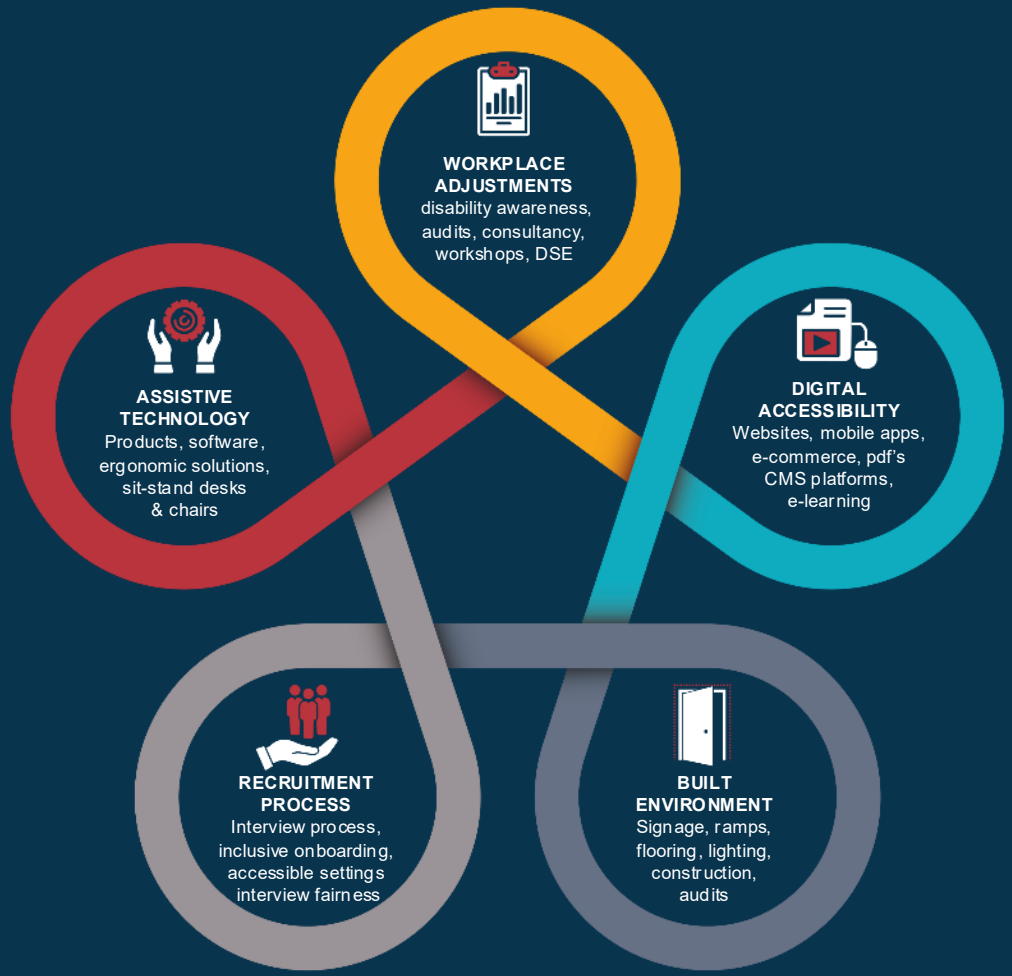
Adapting to Age

Considering Age Inclusive Digital Accessibility

25th September 2025

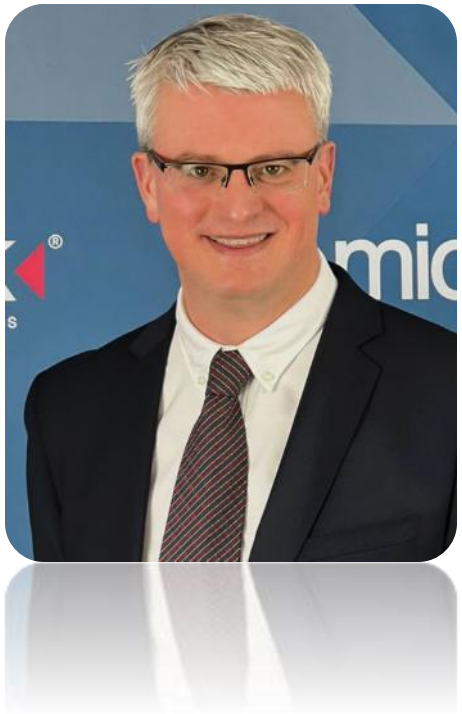


microlink®
people focused solutions

Unrestricted Grade 0

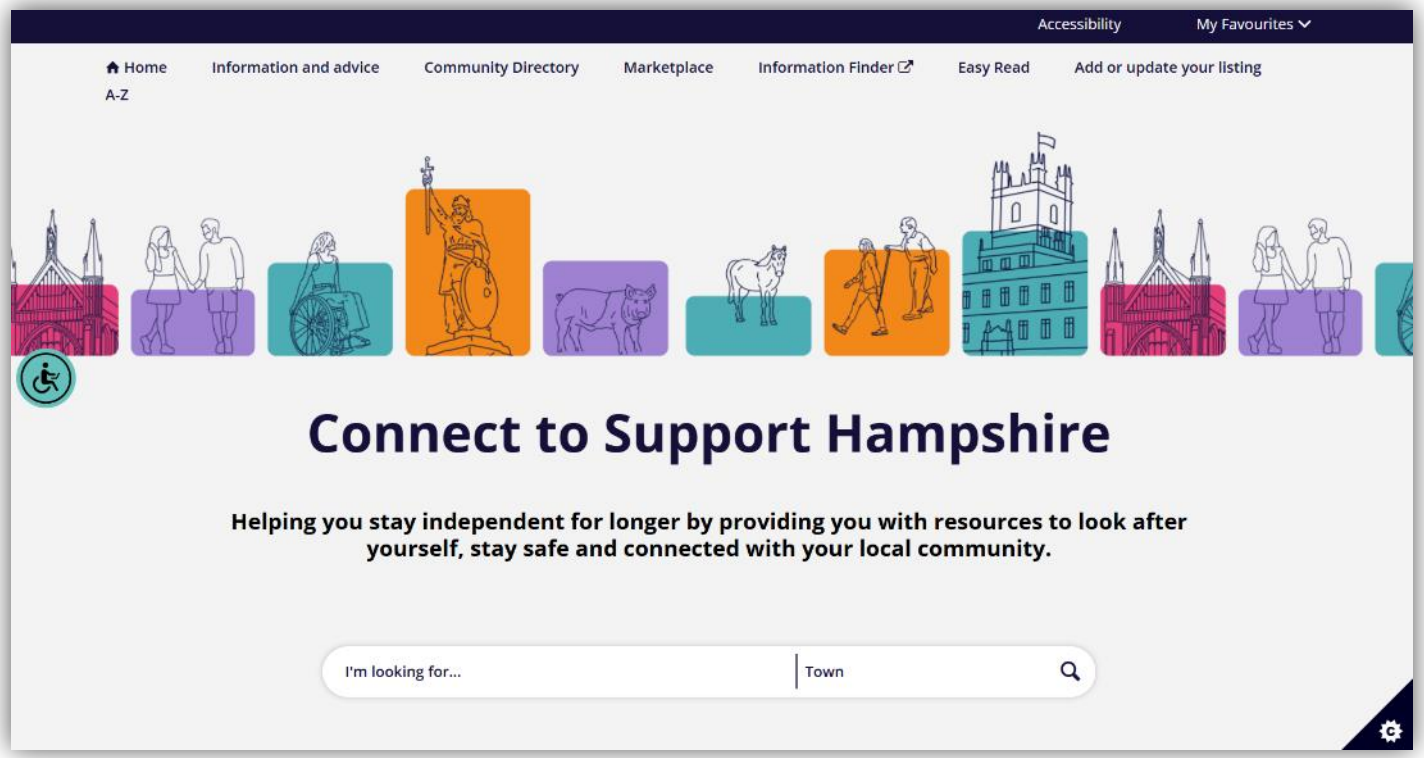
Introduction

- **Head of Digital Accessibility at Microlink:** Dr Neil Rogers
- **Background:** worked in educational publishing and news media production since 2000, specialising in Digital Accessibility from 2014.
- **PhD:** gained digital accessibility doctorate in 2019.



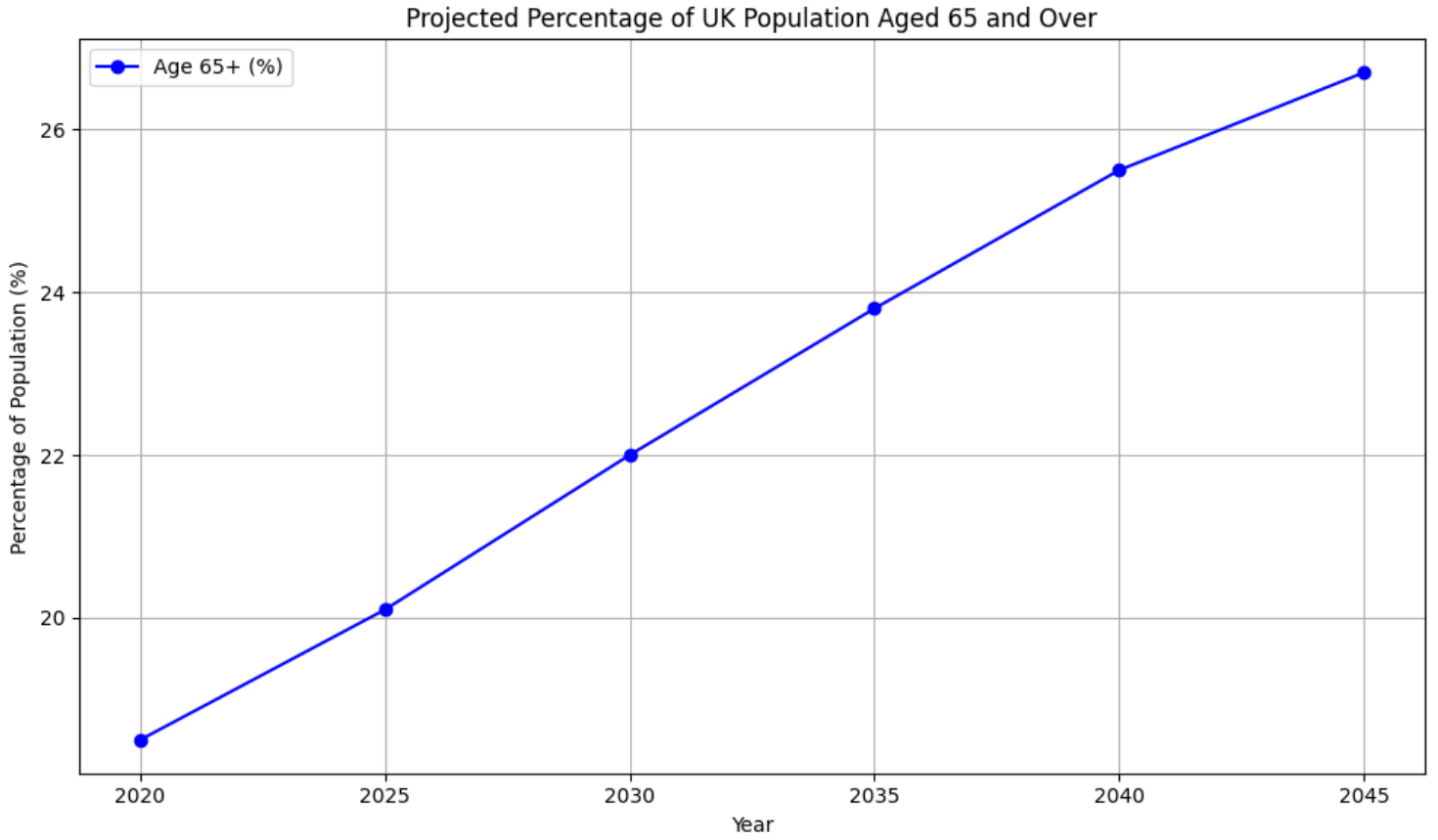
Connect to Support Hampshire

- Advised Connect to Support Hampshire (CTSH): on the accessibility of their website Home | Hampshire CTSH
- Target demographic: Older adults 65+ and those with cognitive impairments.
- Methodology: Rapid literature review, user testing and expert review.



Why focus on aging?

- Aging UK Population: By 2040, over 25% of the UK population will be aged 65+ (ONS, 2020).
- According to the ONS and Statista:
  - The UK population aged 65 and over is projected to reach approximately 16.8 million by 2040 (ONS, 2020).
  - This includes around 6.5 million people aged 75 and over (Statista, 2025).



Unrestricted Grade 0

Significant Implications

- **Significant Implications:** Projected rise in the UK's population aged 65+ to over 25% by 2040 has significant implications for:
  - Carers
  - The working-age population
  - Systemic challenges.



Unrestricted Grade 0

Increased Demand for Carers

- **Informal Care Pressure:** 5.8 million unpaid carers with a rising number providing 50+ hours/week (Carers UK, 2025).
- **Unmet Needs:** 2 million people aged 65+ have unmet care needs (Age UK, 2024).
- **Workforce Shortages:** 152,000 daily vacancies in adult social care with 1 in 3 staff left in 2022/23 (Age UK, 2024).



Unrestricted Grade 0

Impact on the Working-Age Population

- **Dual Burden:** 1.7 million people provide 50+ hrs per week of unpaid care. Many reduce work or leave jobs. **Estimated economic value**: £184 billion per year for unpaid care (Carers UK, 2025).
- **Economic Strain:** Ageing population driving up pension costs—£132 billion spent in 2023–24 (5.1% of GDP). (Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 2025).



Unrestricted Grade 0

Systemic Challenges

- **Healthcare Pressure:** Older adults are the highest users of NHS and social care. A&E visits rise with age; delays in care worsen outcomes (Age UK, 2024).
- **Policy Response Needed:** Calls for integrated health and social care, paid leave for carers, and strategic workforce planning (Age UK, 2024).

Unrestricted Grade 0

Defining Digital Inclusion

- National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA): The activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (NDIA, 2024).
- Digital inclusion: means removing barriers that prevent people from accessing and using digital content. These barriers may include
  - Inaccessible systems
  - Lack of digital skills or understanding
  - Lack of devices
  - Poor internet connectivity

  (Lexdis, 2025).



Unrestricted Grade 0

Digital Exclusion Among Older Adults

- Access Gaps:
  - 21% of over-65s lack home internet (Ofcom, 2025).
  - 18% do not use the internet at all (Age UK, 2024).
- Skills & Confidence Barriers:
  - **Common fears:** making mistakes, not knowing what to do, scams, implicit interfaces (e.g., burger and three dot menus).
  - 37% unable to complete basic digital tasks (Age UK, 2024).
  - 20% lack essential digital skills (Age UK, 2024).

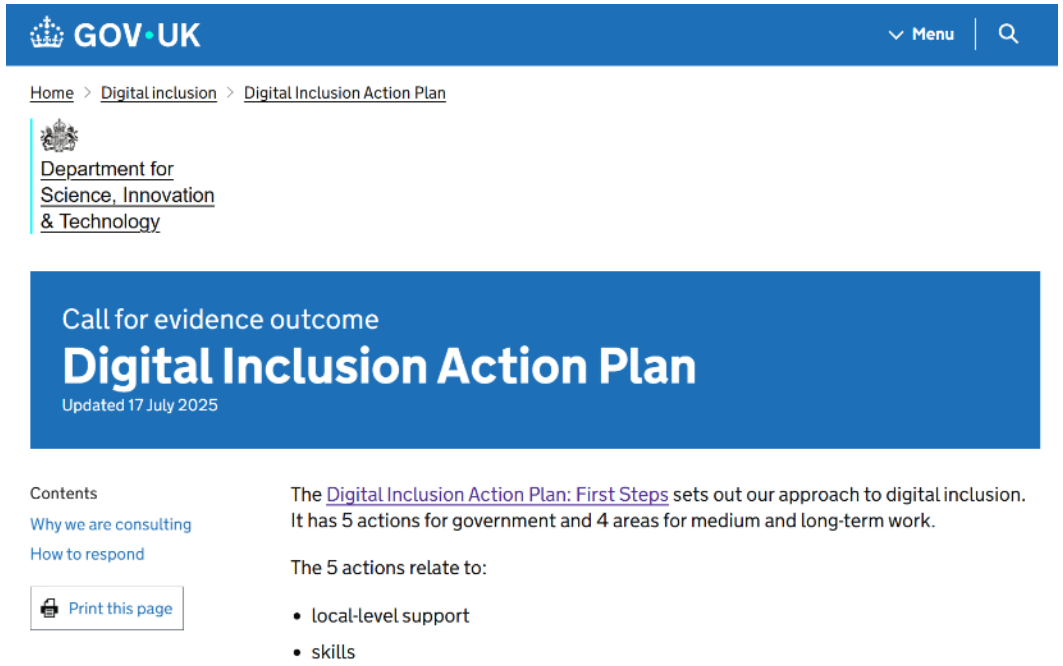


Unrestricted Grade 0

UK Digital Inclusion Action Plan 2025

- **Purpose**: UK Government to improve digital access and skills, especially for older adults.
- [Digital Inclusion Action Plan - GOV.UK]
- Key Initiatives:
  - Device donation schemes
  - Community-based digital skills training
  - A Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund

  (Digital Inclusion Action Plan First Steps, 2025).



Web Use Among Older Adults

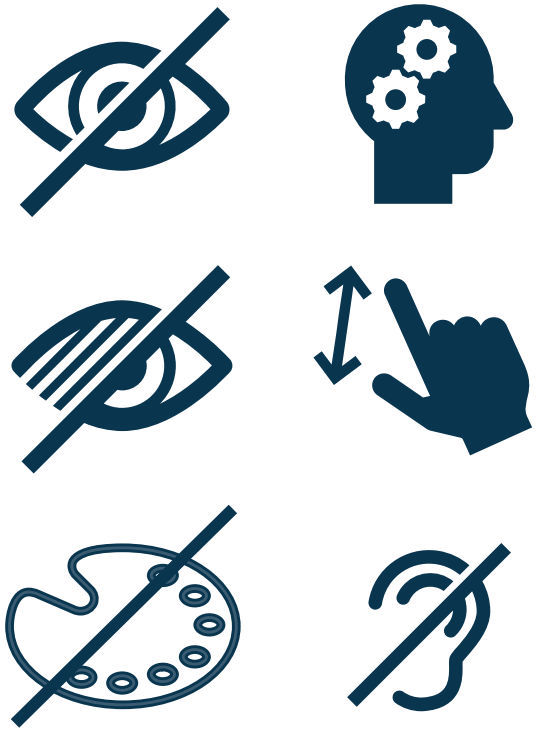
- 65+ Age Group:
  - 80% (≈10.1 million) use the [web] monthly (Age UK, 2024)
- 75+ Age Group:
  - 68% (≈4.1 million) are regular users (Age UK, 2024)
- Looking Ahead:
  - No official forecast available for 2040 usage.



Unrestricted Grade 0

Impairments for Older Adults

- **Vision:** Reduced contrast sensitivity, loss of reading vision due to age, and colour perception challenges.
- **Hearing:** Hearing loss, may require aids.
- **Motor Skills:** Arthritis, tremors, slower response times.
- **Cognition:** Memory, attention, and difficulty learning new interfaces.
- **Multiple Impairments:** are common; acquired conditions increase with age and many older adults may not see themselves as disabled.



Unrestricted Grade 0

Defining Digital Accessibility

- **Core Question:** Are your digital assets usable by disabled people?
- **Key Principles:**
  Ensuring digital technologies, services and resources are accessible
  - Designed with diverse needs in mind.
  - Flexible and [customisable] for individuals.
  - Compatible with assistive technologies.
  - Compliant with accessibility standards and regulations (Lexdis, 2025).



Lived Experience

- Participant Profile:
  - Age: Mid-70s.
  - Diagnosis: Recently diagnosed with frontal lobe dementia.
- Impact:
  - Unable to join this session due to cognitive health challenges.



Unrestricted Grade 0

Barriers Experienced 1

1. Link description:
   - The participant was unable to recognise links—even well-described ones. Eg. Sample accessibility statement - GOV.UK
2. Implicit Knowledge:
   - Icons like burger menus or three-dot menus were unfamiliar.
3. Searching for Information:
   - The participant was unfamiliar with where and how to search.
   - And was not aware of possible search strategies and limitations.



Unrestricted Grade 0

Barriers Experienced 2

4. Getting Help:
    - The participant struggled to find relevant help options and the information provided did not relate to the help required.
5. Additional Resources:
    - Document titles sometimes did not match the link text confusing the participant.



Unrestricted Grade 0

Inclusive Design for Older Adults

- **User Testing:** Involve older adults to uncover real usability barriers.
- **Clarity & Simplicity:** Prioritise straightforward layouts and language.
- **Text Readability:** Use large, high-contrast sans serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, 12–14pt).
- **Navigation:** Keep navigation clear, consistent, and simplified.
- **Layout & Spacing:** Use minimalist design with generous spacing.





Unrestricted Grade 0

Enhancing Usability & Understanding

- **Icons & Labels:** Pair icons with text for clarity and test with assistive technology, such as screen reader.
- **Language:** Avoid jargon; use plain English (e.g., Crystal Mark guidance).
- **Reading Order:** Ensure content flows left to right horizontally. Avoid, for example, vertical navigation.
- **Visuals:** Use sharp, clear graphics and images.
- **Links:** Describe links clearly, use visual cues (e.g., blue, underlined), and provide instructions in help pages. Avoid poorly described links such as 'Click Here'.



Unrestricted Grade 0

Supporting Navigation & Help

- **Implicit Knowledge:** Explain icons like the burger or three-dot menus in help content.
- **Search Support:** Clearly show where and how to search; explain limitations.
- **Getting Help:** Make help options easy to find, ensure help information is relevant, link help pages to accessibility statements and vice versa.
- **Additional Resources:** Match document titles with link text so the user knows they are reading the correct document.











Unrestricted Grade 0

Business Case for Digital Accessibility 1

- **Population:** 1 in 5 people in the UK are disabled (22%) (Purple Goat, 2023).
- **Losses to UK business:** £2 billion per month lost by UK businesses ignoring disabled customers (Purple Goat, 2023).
- **UK Spend Per Year:** £274 billion per year spent by UK families with disabled members (Purple Goat, 2023).
- **Reach More Customers:** 14M+ disabled people in the UK represent a valuable, underserved market (Lukins, 2025).



Business Case for Digital Accessibility 2

- **Legal Compliance:** Required by the Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations (Lukins, 2025 & Heathcote, C, 2022).
- **Reputation:** Inclusive design builds trust, supports ESG goals, and shows social responsibility (Lukins, 2025).
- **Better Usability for All:** Features like [...] keyboard access improve UX for everyone (GDS & CDDO, 2021).
- **Future-Proofing:** Aligning with WCAG helps UK businesses meet EU accessibility laws (Lukins, 2025).

Central Digital & Data Office

W3C WAI-AA WCAG 2.2

Call to action

- **User Testing:** Involve older adults in user testing.
- **Digital Products:** Review your digital products with ageing in mind.
- **Advocacy:** Advocate for digital accessibility in your teams.



Unrestricted Grade 0

References 1

1. Age UK, 2024. State of Health and Care of Older People in England 2024. [online] Available at: https://www.ageuk.org.uk [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].
2. British Dyslexia Association (BDA), 2018. Dyslexic Style Guide 2018: Creating Dyslexia Friendly Content. [online] Available at: https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].
3. Carers UK, 2025. Facts about carers. pp.1–20. [online] Available at: https://www.carersuk.org [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].
4. Department for Science, Innovation & Technology et al., 2025. Digital Inclusion Action Plan: First Steps. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: https://www.gov.uk [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].
5. Government Digital Service and Central Digital and Data Office (GDS & CDDO), 2021. Guidance and tools for digital accessibility. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-and-tools-for-digital-accessibility [Accessed 10 Sep. 2025].

Unrestricted Grade 0

References 2

6. Heathcote, C., 2022. *Some changes to the public sector digital accessibility regulations*. [online] Accessibility in Government Blog. Available at: https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2022/12/09/some-changes-to-the-public-sector-digital-accessibility-regulations/ [Accessed 10 Sep. 2025].

7. LexDis, 2025. *What is Digital Accessibility and Inclusion?* [online] Lexdis 2.0. Available at: https://www.lexdis.org [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].

8. Lukins, M., 2025. *The UK's regulatory approach to accessibility*. [online] Taylor Wessing. Available at: https://www.taylorwessing.com/en/interface/2025/accessibility/the-uks-regulatory-approach-to-accessibility [Accessed 10 Sep. 2025].

9. National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), 2024. *Definitions*. [online] Available at: https://www.digitalinclusion.org [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].

Unrestricted Grade 0

References 3

10. **Ofcom, 2025.** *Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Report*. pp.1–39. [online] Available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].
11. **Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2020.** Local authority ageing statistics, population projections for older people. [online] Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].
12. **Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 2025.** Volume 41, Issue 1, Spring 2025, Pages 153–166. [online] Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/graf008 [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].
13. **Purple Goat Agency - Purple Pound, 2023.** Available at: https://www.purplegoatagency.com/insights/purple-pound/ (Accessed: 10 September 2025)
14. **Statista, 2025.** Elderly UK population projection, by age 2020–2050. [online] Available at: https://www.statista.com [Accessed 8 Sep. 2025].

Unrestricted Grade 0

Microlink pc (UK) Ltd
Microlink house
Brickfield Lane
Chandler's Ford
Hampshire
SO53 4DP

THANK YOU

Dr Neil Rogers
Digital Accessibility Consultant
neil.rogers@microlinkpc.com • Digital Accessibility Animation - YouTube • Retail PDF Remediation - Microlink

www.microlinkpc.com
Company registered in England No. 03325643

Unrestricted Grade 0