

Purple

Changing the conversation

Inclusive Economic & Social Recovery Plans



Purple's Perspective

There is a body of evidence showing disabled people have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19. A recent report by the ONS acknowledged disabled people have spent more time on their own and as a result, have felt more isolated.

A recent policy brief by the United Nations – A Disability Inclusive Response to Covid-19 – reinforces deepening levels of pre-existing inequalities, and exposes the extent of exclusion and need for action to deliver disability inclusion.

We know across the globe there are over one billion disabled people who remain one of the most excluded groups in our society and are among the hardest hit in this pandemic in terms of fatalities.

Emerging from such tragedy is a huge opportunity for society and for disabled people. And one solution is to ensure all economic and social recovery plans are inclusive from the outset - integrating disability principles as part of the building blocks rather than a retrofit. The focus on society and making a positive social impact has never been so 'in fashion' and a core fabric of putting things back together differently.

Economically, this is our moment to tell a worldwide audience what we have been saying for a long time. In the UK alone, the consumer spending power of 13.8 million disabled people and their families – the Purple Pound – equates to £249 billion a year and rising at 14% per annum. The disability market is too big and important to be ignored. As businesses attempt to kick start, engage, or re-engage with their customers demonstrating inclusive credentials will become mandatory for success.

Purple believes there are **three fundamental standards** needed to ensure economic and social recovery plans are inclusive. They are:

- Ensuring social distancing measures of the built environment are accessible for disabled employees, customers, residents and visitors.
- Ensuring all digital communications, including websites, have a foundation level of accessibility in place as a minimum.
- Including inclusive approaches to customer service as part of all new training programmes for staff.

These standards are not a panacea for disability inclusion but the foundation blocks for ensuring the minimum accessibility is in place, creating a platform for further ambition and development.



The Built Environment Considerations

Applying the principles of accessibility and design to your business will not only give you the opportunity to make your location more accessible but will also help you to successfully implement social distancing measures. Applying accessible design rules to signage will ensure disabled people with physical, cognitive and sensory barriers will be able to access information. Font style, size, colour and contrast as well as language, layout and placement will ensure the information can be accessed by everyone.

Other considerations regarding your building:

- Ensure accessible / disabled toilets remain open for those with disabilities only and are not included in your wider strategy to alleviate pressure on toilet access due to the impacts of social distancing and queuing.
- Consider providing seating in areas where social distance queues are likely to form.
- Provide disabled visitors with a Sunflower Lanyard to help identify those with hidden disabilities using your space and who may need additional support.
- Ensure that Plexiglas or Perspex screens have contrasting markers to ensure they are visible to people with visual impairments or cognitive difficulties.
- If implementing a 'Hot Desking' strategy to support a move to more flexible and remote working practices, you should consider the impact on employees with Autism and Asperger's who may find constant change very unsettling. Therefore consider, keeping some desks static for those employees.



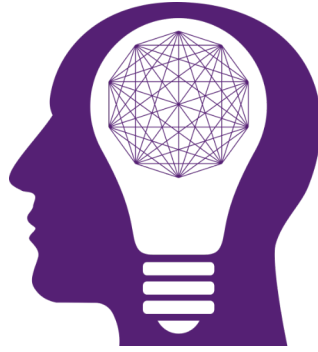
The Online Environment Considerations

As behaviours change people are becoming more reliant on websites for information, shopping, and communication. Websites become a gate, not gateway if they are not accessible. A quick web accessibility audit can identify improvements such as:

- Ensuring the site can be navigated using a keyboard.
- Ensuring you do not use block capitals unless necessary as these can be difficult to read for people who have learning difficulties or those who use screen readers.
- Ensuring the correct colour contrasts are used and avoiding inaccessible combinations such as red & green, green & brown, green & blue, blue & grey, blue & purple, green & grey and green & black.
- Ensuring the font style and size meet the guidelines set out.

Having an accessibility toolbar included on your website will demonstrate going the extra mile, enabling the user to add extra functionality to your website and assist navigation. Your website should be optimised for the use of mobile and tablet devices.

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Inclusive Training for Front Line Staff

All organisations will have some form of recovery plan and will need to refresh their customer service training for staff to make the 'new normal' work. Disability needs to be integrated into this training rather than viewed as a 'bolt-on' extra. This should cover general awareness, language and etiquette and can be as straightforward as including customers with differing impairments as case studies or examples.

One Final Thought

Each recovery plan will reflect the organisation's own style of approach and priorities. The three disability standards can either be included as a standalone section or in the relevant place/s within plans. Monitoring against the standards should be an integral part of the plan's overall continuous review, but it is strongly suggested that views are elicited from both disabled staff and customers as part of any process.

Mike Adams OBE
CEO, Purple

For More Information

If you have any questions or would like to discuss how Purple can support your Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery Plans please contact:

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