Publishing compliance guidelines
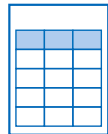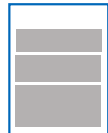
Inclusive communication

Inclusive communication means sharing information in a way that everybody can understand. Inclusive communication makes services more accessible. The requirement for information to be accessible is included in anti-discrimination legislation. All Scottish Government written information should be created to be as accessible as possible.

The compliance guidance below will help you to do this and sets a basic standard for your document.
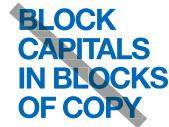
Guidance

1		Use preset Heading styles in Word (Heading 1 - 6) as this provides a clear and consistent structure throughout the document.
2		Tables should only be used for data and not layout or design purposes.
3		Don't use text boxes, apply borders to paragraphs instead using the border tool in the ribbon.
4		Contrast between text and background colour should be as high as possible. For example, black on white; black on yellow **not** yellow on white. Do **not** put text over images or pictures or graphics.
5	<img>	Ensure there is a text description for all images as **Alt text** is used to describe what the image communicates or what the image does.

6	**aa**	Minimum font size – 12 point. Footnotes should be 10 point minimum in the same font.
7	BLOCK CAPITALS IN BLOCKS OF COPY	Don't use block capital letters, instead use sentence case.
8	**Bold**	Minimise the use of bold, only highlight a few words for emphasis. Never use underlining.
9	*a*	Don't use italics unless you are briefly quoting from a source or reference. Avoid using with bold.
10		Text should always be left aligned – not fully justified.
11	**Clan** Arial	Only use fonts that are sans serif such as Clan or Arial.
12	means **DANGER**	Colour alone should not be used to convey information. Where colour is used a key must be provided.
13	Click Here	Use descriptive display text for links: About the Scottish Government. Don't use "click here" or bare URLs "https://www.gov.scot/about/".
14		Be consistent. For example, when using bullets, stick to one format throughout. Keep bullets short.
15		The space between two columns of text should be large enough to be distinct.
16		Don't have blank pages in documents.

Accessible Writing

17		Always think of your audience before writing and give serious consideration to providing alternative formats on request: Braille, Audio, British Sign Language (BSL), Easy Read, or alternative solutions. Keep a plain text version for Braille transcription.
18		Keep language simple – avoid jargon. Take your audiences into account as you consider where, and when, to use short forms of terms or organisation names. Spell out acronyms when using for the first time and put them in parenthesis at first use. Any uncommon acronyms should always be spelled out in full.
19		Keep sentences short (maximum 14 words) Example: Try to keep the sentences you write as short as possible.
20		Use good punctuation, applied consistently throughout the document.
21		'Front-load' titles where the words people are most likely to search for are at the front and use colons as connectors. For example, 'Income Tax reform: impact assessment' is clearer than 'An assessment of the impact of proposed reforms to Income Tax'. Keep titles short and concise.
22		Documents should be supplied as Word. Documents formatted in InDesign can be accepted, but should be accompanied by a PDF file for reference. PowerPoint should not be used to create documents.

Publishing guidance can be found on Saltire, under Writing and Publishing.

To discuss issues with the web registration form or the timing of your publication going live, email your APS contact.

To discuss the URL (web address) or the display of the publication on the website, email the gov.scot website team.