

# **Inclusivity consultancy, user testing and research services**

**G-Cloud 15**

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## Inclusivity consultancy, user testing and research services

Our content and customer experience services reach from behavioural insight and inclusivity strategy, through human-centred service design, to digital experience platform strategy and out into digital, creative, content and UX design and delivery. CDS' comprehensive suite of customer experience services deliver compelling, intuitive and accessible user journeys, improving engagement and supporting the effortless delivery of digital services to our clients' customer bases.

CDS' multidisciplinary agile teams, user research specialists, design studio and accessibility teams provide digital experience platform strategy and implementation, behavioural insight, research and analysis, accessibility and inclusivity strategy definition and implementation, audience engagement/UX services, content strategy and content creation and communications planning and delivery.

We work with trusted open-source and low-code partners to define, architect and build engaging front ends with minimal cost and effortless maintenance, and our content strategists provide clear, concise copy with robust information architectures, keeping our customers' content fresh and accurate.

CDS' content and customer experience services include:

- Accessibility consultancy, training, workshops and support
- Accessibility training: creating PDFs and HTML from source files
- Accessibility training in PDF remediation using Adobe Acrobat
- Accessibility audit and accessibility testing
- Inclusivity consultancy, user testing and research services
- Content strategy, measurement and optimisation services
- Content strategy and design consultancy
- Content design, strategy and editorial services
- Content design for digital channels
- Content production cloud solutions
- Web editing and proofing and content services
- Discovery research and design
- Experience and service optimisation
- Service design and strategy
- User journey mapping and analysis
- Design system and DesignOps
- User experience design consultancy
- Digital experience platform (DXP) design and performance.

Our user-centred approach aligns with the GDS Standard and supports users with a range of digital literacy/skills and accessibility needs.

## Case study

In response to Ofwat's AMP7 regulations, Yorkshire Water needed to rethink how it engaged with its 2.3m customers digitally to deliver more customer-focussed services and deliver its customer experience strategy.

Yorkshire Water's primary customer service channel was via telephone, which was inefficient and, despite the excellent work of its contact centre, did not always meet customer needs. The organisation needed a partner to improve the delivery of its online services and design a new customer-centric digital platform that would reduce the number of inbound calls and ensure customer communications were as inclusive and accessible as possible.

CDS' service design team delivered research and design thinking, aimed at understanding and developing the channel strategy. Our aim was to identify how customer engagement could change in a way that was preferable for customers and manageable for the business, to deliver a better experience for both.

We conducted research to understand where customers were engaging, where they wanted to engage and the challenges they experienced. We mapped user journeys and created 'as-is' maps showing how users interacted with the service, and the steps, actions and challenges they experienced. Using ideation sessions, we created 'to-be' service blueprints and tested them frequently with users, remaining focussed on customer needs and pain-points throughout the design process.

We also engaged with various teams within the business, and added the business perspective of people, processes and systems involved in those journeys.

We presented evidence-based recommendations around what digital channels needed to do to help customers engage with the business, and how channels could operate together to deliver a joined-up experience.

The research underpinned the content strategy and wireframes created by our user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) designers. We undertook a joint approach to development, testing, planning, and prioritising, which ensured the new website went live on time and with more functionality than originally planned.

Since its launch, the new platform has resulted in a 20% reduction in billing contacts, creating improved efficiency and customer experience and significant reduction in ongoing operational costs. The redesigned website won Gold 'Best Use of Digital from the Energy and Utilities Sector' at the Digital Impact Awards 2021.

## Service overview

Our inclusivity consultancy, user testing and research services help ensure applications, services, products and information are accessible and available to all users and comply with GDS Service Standard and WCAG 2.2 Level AA as a minimum. Our audit and content services help public sector organisations provide an intuitive user experience for all users.

## Features and benefits

### Features

- Review Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) A, AA, AAA conformance
- Adheres to GDS Service Manual recommendations
- International industry best practice and methodology
- Manual and automated testing tools
- Comprehensive cross browser and device testing
- Modern assistive technology testing
- Optional accessibility user testing with disabled users
- In-depth report with realistic technical solutions
- Assessment of disproportionate burden
- User research participant recruitment including disabled and hard-to-reach people.

### Benefits

- Understand and remove barriers that exclude users
- Meet accessibility requirements and WCAG 2.2 Level AA compliance
- Offer an inclusive user experience
- Minimise legal risk of discrimination
- Detailed report evidencing accessibility considerations
- Access to a wider portfolio of accessibility services
- Services delivered within the agreed project timeline and budget
- Meet the requirements of GDS Alpha and Beta assessments.

## Our approach

CDS' inclusivity consultancy, user testing and research services help to ensure clients' services, products and information are accessible and available to all users, regardless of ability, language, age, or location.

Our service helps organisations:

- Ratify communications output across online and offline channels
- Gain a deeper understanding of users
- Create meaningful experiences for as many people as possible
- Understand and change user behaviour.

Our inclusivity consultancy audits comply with the latest regulatory and legal requirements.

Inclusivity consultancy can touch every customer-facing output:

- Brand guidelines: checking colour contrasts, fonts, tone of voice
- Printed collateral: font sizes, paper stock and size, use and type of imagery
- Video output: subtitle use, audio commentary, translations and inclusive casting
- Online presence: website accessibility, social media presence, conversational UIs.

## Stakeholder discovery

We map the stakeholder landscape to understand who to engage and benchmark the current scenario, identify areas of opportunity and friction and understand the current communications structure, its validity and use.

This provides us with an opportunity to truly understand how stakeholders currently interact, what their needs are and how they can be better supported across all journeys.

## Data analysis

We perform in-depth analysis of existing data to segment and define the audience, their needs and behaviour. This analysis can help improve targeting, personalisation and performance of communications, both online and offline.

## Audience definition and needs analysis

Using the outputs of discovery and data analysis, we define the audience. Every customer should receive the best service, regardless of their impairment, for example:

- Age
- First language
- Visual impairment/blindness
- Hearing impairment/deafness
- Mobility/physical impairments /dexterity
- Cognitive impairments/learning disability
- Mental health conditions
- Long-term health conditions.

Audience definition enables us to segment users by inclusivity needs and requirements, rather than shared interests and demographics.

## Audience engagement and research

Traditional target audience segments are generic and do not help define how organisations can address inclusivity needs. By digging a little deeper into users' expectations, circumstances and limitations, we can build a rounded view of an organisation's userbase and assess whether the communications strategy and output is fit for purpose.

Typical activities include:

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Face-to-face interviews
- Workshops.

## Competitor/sector analysis

Each sector has its own accessibility and inclusivity best practices, standards, rules and expectations. Our competitor/peer analysis shows how an organisation measures up against the rest of its sector.

## Brand review and baselining

Making brand guidelines inclusive is essential for any organisation to ensure it delivers communications that are accessible for all users and customers. Our brand review looks at several elements of inclusive communications:

- Brand colours
- Fonts and typography
- Imagery and diagrams
- Language, tone of voice.

All recommendations are collated and used as the basis for new, inclusive brand guidelines (as needed) to be used as a basis for future collateral creation.

## Communications audit

We analyse and audit each piece of collateral relevant to a specific user journey.

Factors included in our communications audit:

- Frequency and channel of communication
- Target audience requirements, including any special needs
- Format and design
- Clarity and simplicity of message
- Use of plain English
- Paper stock and finish.

The term 'collateral' covers every piece of customer-facing communication, but could include:

- Brochures and catalogues
- Product information
- Marketing and promotional material
- PDFs
- Posters and point-of-sale (POS) items.

## WCAG accessibility audit

To help identify potential accessibility barriers in clients' web content, we can provide accessibility audits, assessing WCAG 2.2 conformance. An accessibility audit provides an expert review of digital service and includes:

- Audit report documentation with overview of any accessibility issues
- Summary of overall level of WCAG 2.2 compliance
- Detailed page-by-page analysis
- Specific information about each WCAG 2.2 failure
- Implementation and code examples for corrective action
- Advice on best practices and recommendations
- Advice on 'disproportionate burden'
- Information for Accessibility Statements.

We audit web content in accordance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Evaluation Methodology (WCAG-EM) and follow the approaches outlined in the GDS Service Manual, Technology Code of Practice and The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

## User testing

Labs are equipped with a range of devices including eye tracking, which provides a non-invasive way of recording natural interactions and the completion of user journeys/tasks. Eye tracking and retrospective interviews provide evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of the service across a range of sites and apps, to inform recommendations for the future.

Collateral can be tested with an inclusive stakeholder group, to measure current performance and outline where improvements can be made. When we have developed new designs and concepts, we can engage users in further testing, to validate our findings and confirm the new approach delivers for the target audience.

## Assistive technology testing

We can offer full assistive technology testing, for a more in-depth understanding of users' accessibility needs and use of assistive technology.

We use a combination of automated and manual testing tools and techniques, as well as assistive technologies including screen readers, screen magnification tools and speech recognition software where appropriate. Additional user testing with disabled users using their own assistive technology is strongly recommended.

We use a mixture of tools and technologies, open-source where possible, as part of our accessibility auditing service, including:

- JAWS screen reader
- JAWS Inspect
- NVDA
- Apple VoiceOver
- Android TalkBack
- Dragon Professional
- Dragon Anywhere
- ZoomText.

## Business continuity and disaster recovery plans

CDS is committed to minimising and managing its exposure to disruption to the business and the services provided to our customers. This encompasses robust systems and processes necessary to maintain continuity of service and operations.

CDS maintains a comprehensive Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery (BCDR) plan, certified to **ISO 23001**, that defines clear roles, responsibilities, processes, and procedures for assessing and responding to disruptions to ensure continuity during disruptions. **Our plan is tested annually with lessons learned incorporated into plan improvements.**

Our Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) is underpinned by regular business impact assessments and threat and risk analyses, and annual tests to ensure all contingencies remain effective, current, and fit for purpose.

## Onboarding and offboarding

### Onboarding

CDS provides a tailored onboarding pathway, based on clients' individual requirements.

Onboarding is a collaborative process, through which we fully understand our clients' short-, medium- and long-term goals, and plan our service accordingly, to deliver best value and appropriate resourcing, governance, communication and planning.

Our multi-disciplinary agile teams will work with project stakeholders to understand the client and project needs and requirements.

We will define and capture ways of working, including definitions of 'ready' and 'done', and identify acceptance criteria for each sprint, underpinned by modern test practices and OKRs.

### Offboarding

Upon starting the engagement, CDS will provide an exit plan for client approval. This will cover matters such as knowledge transfer and documentation, roll-off schedules, data and asset transfer, intellectual property and removal of access / permissions and return of devices / equipment.

Ownership of data contained in any solution belongs to and rests with the client; as the service is decommissioned, raw data will be transferred to the client. CDS is certified to ISO 27001 for data security and will always adhere to these standards – including data removal and destruction.

## Ways of working

At CDS we apply agile principles across our projects, primarily using the SCRUM Agile methodology. We operate multi-disciplinary squads that combine domain expertise with technical excellence, delivering value early and iteratively through two-week sprints. Our approach is underpinned by the following core practices:

- **Daily standups:** A team call for 15 minutes each morning to track progress, surface blockers and ensure sprint goals are achieved.
- **Sprint planning:** Held at the start of each sprint to prioritise the work, align on objectives and ensure the team is fully prepared.
- **Sprint review:** At the end of the sprint, the team demonstrate to all stakeholders the deliverables achieved and present the sprint goal for the next sprint.
- **Sprint retrospective:** For each sprint the team will review what went well, identify areas of improvement and embed lessons learned to drive continuous improvement.

Additionally, we have an Agile mindset and culture at CDS, in which we apply:

- **User-centred design and customer-focus:** Through collaboration and partnership working we deliver outcomes that meet user needs.
- **Adaptability and flexibility:** Short feedback loops enable us to respond quickly to change, with teams empowered to pivot as required.
- **Continuous learning:** Retrospectives encourage open, honest feedback to continually improve ways of working and delivery effectiveness.
- **Partnership and teamwork:** We create a one-team culture with our clients and their supplier partners, working collectively towards shared project goals.

## Training

As well as continual ‘on the job’ knowledge transfer to upskill client teams, CDS can provide formal, comprehensive training for administrators and users prior to handover and go live designed to support successful change management, ensure smooth implementation and embed solutions that are integral to business operations. Our training also builds internal technical capability, empowering teams to become self-sufficient and reduce the long-term cost of change.

In most cases, we adopt a ‘train-the-trainer’ model, delivered through a blend of on-site and remote sessions. This is supported by comprehensive training materials and easy-to-follow digital end-user guides, written for non-technical audiences and compliant with WCAG 2.2 accessibility guidelines.

## Service constraints

Attainable service levels will be dependent upon the service performance of cloud suppliers within the service chain. Maintenance windows may apply, and clients should refer to the SLA for the specific service in use.

## Ordering and invoicing

We recommend contacting CDS before placing an order via G Cloud 15, to confirm and agree scope, scale, SLAs, KPIs, outcomes, etc. We will be pleased to support clients to define statements of work that reflect their requirements.

Invoices are issued monthly in arrears, with payment terms of 30 days.

## Pricing

Timescales and costs vary, depending on several factors; we recommend a preliminary review to provide a firm cost.

Please refer to our pricing document and rate card.

## Industry standards

CDS delivers all its services to internationally recognised standards. CDS is accredited to the following standards:

- ISO 9001 Quality Management System.
- ISO 27001 Information Security Management.
- ISO 20000 IT Service Management and IASME certified.
- ISO 14001 Environmental Management.
- BSI 1008 Electronic Information.
- ISO 22301 Security and Resilience (Business Continuity).
- ISO 45001 Health and Safety Management.
- ISO 10008 Evidential Weight and Legal Admissibility of Electronic Information.
- ISO 50001 Energy Management Standard.
- Cyber Essentials Plus.
- IASME certified.
- ITIL compliant service desk.
- PlanetMark Sustainability.

We comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR regulations.

## Contact details

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