

5.1 Website accessibility

Compliance with web content accessibility guidelines ensures that the website follows accepted best-practice and is available to as wide an audience as possible. The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative authors the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines V1.0 <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/> as guidelines for web developers to create fully accessible websites.

Website accessibility is an important issue. First of all, there is a legal requirement under the UK Disability Discrimination Act to ensure that disabled website users (people with visual impairment or learning difficulties) are not disadvantaged in trying to access online content or services. Secondly, by publishing fully accessible website content, you are ensuring that the website can be used by the widest range of users and not just disabled users. An example of this is that accessible web pages will render correctly in all current Internet browser programs. On the other hand, web pages that are not published with accessible code may not render correctly in the user's browser, to the extent that some content may not appear.

Four web pages were tested on the W3C Validator Tool <http://validator.w3.org> as valid XHTML 1.0 Transitional code. The Home page, Services and David Urquhart Travel case study (<http://www.stevensonsharpe.co.uk/html/cases/studies/buses.html>) and all passed as valid HTML 4.01 Transitional code.

The Contact Us page however failed with over 17 errors

Result: Failed validation, 17 errors
Address: <http://www.stevensonsharpe.co.uk/html/contact/index.htm>
Encoding: iso-8859-1 (detect automatically)
Doctype: HTML 4.01 Transitional (detect automatically)

Revalidate With Options
Revalidate: Show Source Show Outline
 Validate error pages Verbose Output

This page is not Valid HTML 4.01 Transitional!

Below are the results of attempting to parse this document with an SGML parser.

- Error** Line 143 column 132: ID "SPACER" already defined.
...hspace="0" vspace="0" border="0" id=" spacer"></td>

An "id" is a unique identifier. Each time this attribute is used in a document it must have a different value. If you are using this attribute as a hook for style sheets it may be more appropriate to use classes (which group elements) than id (which are used to identify exactly one element).

The coding errors listed on for the Contact Us form could be a combination of the Stevenson Sharpe web developer having used deprecated (or obsolete) HTML tags or having written incorrect HTML syntax by omitting HTML tags or positioning them incorrectly on the page.