

Case Study

Leicestershire County Council – Disabled user testing March 2006

The Brief

Leicestershire County Council (LCC) had commissioned an accessibility audit of their site www.leics.gov.uk. This work was undertaken by our accessibility partners 'Communis'. Based on their recommendations LCC completed a programme of work aimed at making the site more accessible. LCC then wanted to see how effective this work had been in making the site accessible to disabled users. LCC was particularly concerned that local disabled users could achieve their goals on the site.

How we responded to the brief

We proposed a short series of individual usability tests with six local users with a range of disabilities; these included blind and partially sighted users and users who could not use a mouse.

What we did

We recruited 6 testers: two blind testers who used Jaws, two partially sighted testers who used Zoomtext and two who did not use a mouse because of RSI.

We discussed the project requirements with the client and produced a facilitation guide that covered both general undirected exploration of the site and some specific tasks including *e.g.* "You have just installed a new fridge and want to get rid of the old one – you live in Loughborough and want to find the address of the Household waste site there - go do this"



In order to make it easy for testers to attend, the testing was conducted in a local hotel in Leicester using our mobile usability testing equipments (i.e. a lap top with web cam and microphone with relevant accessibility software loaded and Techsmith Morae to enable picture-in-picture recording)

The testing was conducted by a WUP

facilitator who adopted a non-directive approach to surface testers' behaviours. The recordings of the testing sessions were analysed to identify issues which were documented in a report that was presented to the client.

The outcomes

The testers had mixed success in achieving tasks on the site; however, all but one had a reasonably favourable view of the site content and usability by the end of their sessions, saying they would revisit the site. The testers were impressed with the effort that LCC had put into the site to make it accessible compared to many other sites that they use.

However, the user testing did uncover a range of issues that affected disabled users, which were passed on to LCC to be rectified. These issues were backed up with code examples and a best practice guide on implementation.

Timing and costs

The project was conducted in spring 2006 and took approximately 4 weeks to complete at a cost of approximately £6,000.