BEST PRACTICE UX GUIDELINES
FOR LOCAL COUNCILS

These guidlines were created based on Jakob Nielsen's heuristic principles, the Government Design Systems and research Telltale Research has conducted with local councils in the UK.

1 VISUAL CONSISTENCY

A holistic set of design standards ensuring consistency across different pages, which users use to identify patterns, functions and actions.

Good design helps users to read, find and understand the hierarchy of information, helping them decide what to do and what to pay attention to.

- [ ] Establish a style guide
- [ ] Implement a grid system
- [ ] Consistency in visual elements across pages (icons, CTA buttons, imagery, etc.)
- [ ] Consistency in content distribution across pages

2 SEMIOTICS TO COMMUNICATE MEANING

Signs and imagery can communicate who the website is for and what they can expect as they navigate around the website.

Good use of semiotics aligns users' expectations from the real world into the digital world.

- [ ] Match colours of visual elements to match real life coding (e.g. red = error)
- [ ] Prompt users with recognisable symbols (e.g. arrows to "go")
- [ ] Ensure iconograpy matches what users know and understand (e.g. triangle = warning)

3 TAILORING TO YOUR COUNCIL RESIDENTS

The design, imagery and language used should be accommodated to the needs of the specific target audience and be representative of the people served.

The foundation of tailoring is how well you know your users and what their needs are.

- [ ] Take into account accessibility issues (disabilities, age, device access, etc.)
- [ ] Offer translated pages or helplines for second and third languages in the local borough
- [ ] Reflect diversity of the community through photos and illustrations
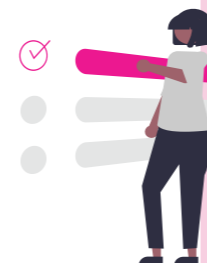
4 REDUCE COGNITIVE LOAD

The language should be clear & concise - users usually skim read online, looking for information that's important & relevant to them.

The quicker you get to the point, the greater the chance users will see the information you want them to.

- [ ] Minimise and simpify content
- [ ] Use sub-headers and collapsable sections for a clear overview
- [ ] Minimise CTA (call to action) buttons for clear user paths
- [ ] Use plain English

5 ORGANISE CONTENT AROUND THE USER JOURNEY

The content should be designed in a way that makes it easy for the user to follow, especially for applications and payments.

Content should be shown at the right time & place so users don't forget or miss important information.

- [ ] Map out the most common user journeys and evaluate how information is organised
- [ ] Use step-by-step overviews and guides for applications and forms
- [ ] Only show information when it's relevant at each step of a user's journey

6 SHOW THE CURRENT STATUS

The website should always keep users informed about what is going on and where they are within the IA (information architecture) / structure of the website.

- [ ] Use breadcrumbs for navigation
- [ ] Use stepper menus or overviews of steps to keep users on track
- [ ] Highlight active sections
- [ ] Provide visual confirmation for submitting things, log in status & payments

7 GIVING THE USER CONTROL & FREEDOM

The transition of services from paper to online continues to present challenges to users - accommodate users.

Allowing users to choose what works best for them (within certain parameters). This allows them to feel empowered and able to complete tasks more confidently.

- [ ] Allow users to choose how they access their services
- [ ] Create clear offerings for user to access their services
- [ ] Allow customisation of notifications or newsletter subscriptions on specific areas of interest

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