# Embedding accessibility within your digital strategy

Dr Abi James

Accessibility Consultant and Researcher

# Accessibility is a journey, not a destination

Journeys need

- Purpose
- Direction
- Organisation
- Safety features

Require:

- Objectives and strategy
- Polices and procedures

Involves anyone procuring, designing, creating or editing digital platforms, content, apps or document – everyone!
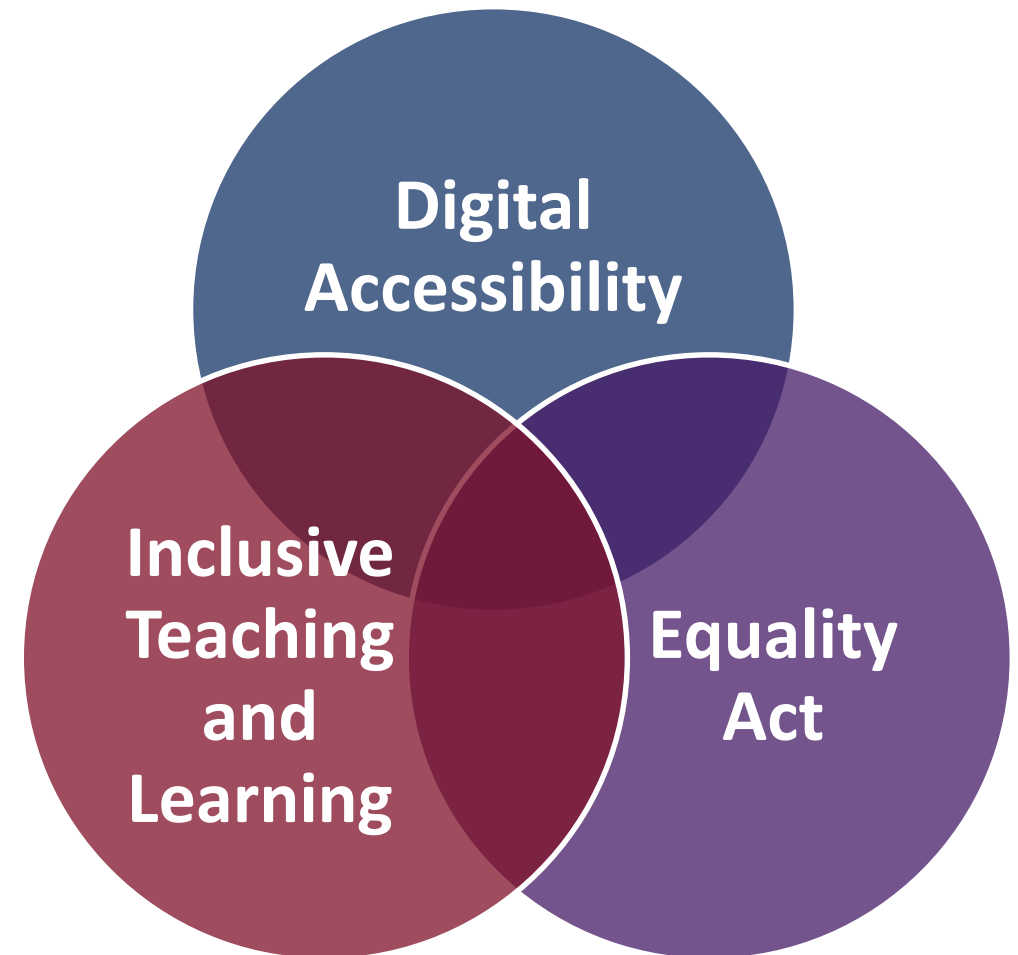
# Digital Accessibility does not stand alone

Includes internal & external facing sites

- Staff platforms
- Public sites
- Student resources

Many digital platforms and resources are based on 3rd party tools

- E-books
- Journals
- Specialist software
- Staff & student support systems

# Accessibility regulations may lead to a wider culture change



Accessibility statements = increased transparency

Increasing public / student expectations

Increased reputational risk

# What do you do when there is an accessibility problem?

# Five stages of accessibility acceptance: AbilityNet

**Denial:** "It can't be important, no one complains. People don't use assistive technology with our site."

**Anger:** "It's not my problem. Don't tell me how to do my job."

**Bargaining:** "I can do a hack without having to do this properly."

**Depression:** "You expect me to meet ALL these standards."

**Acceptance:** "Ok we see what needs to be done and we are working on a strategy."

# Accessibility acceptance requires change management



The Kübler-Ross Change Curve

Energy

Shock & Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

www.change-management-coach.com

Integration of Change
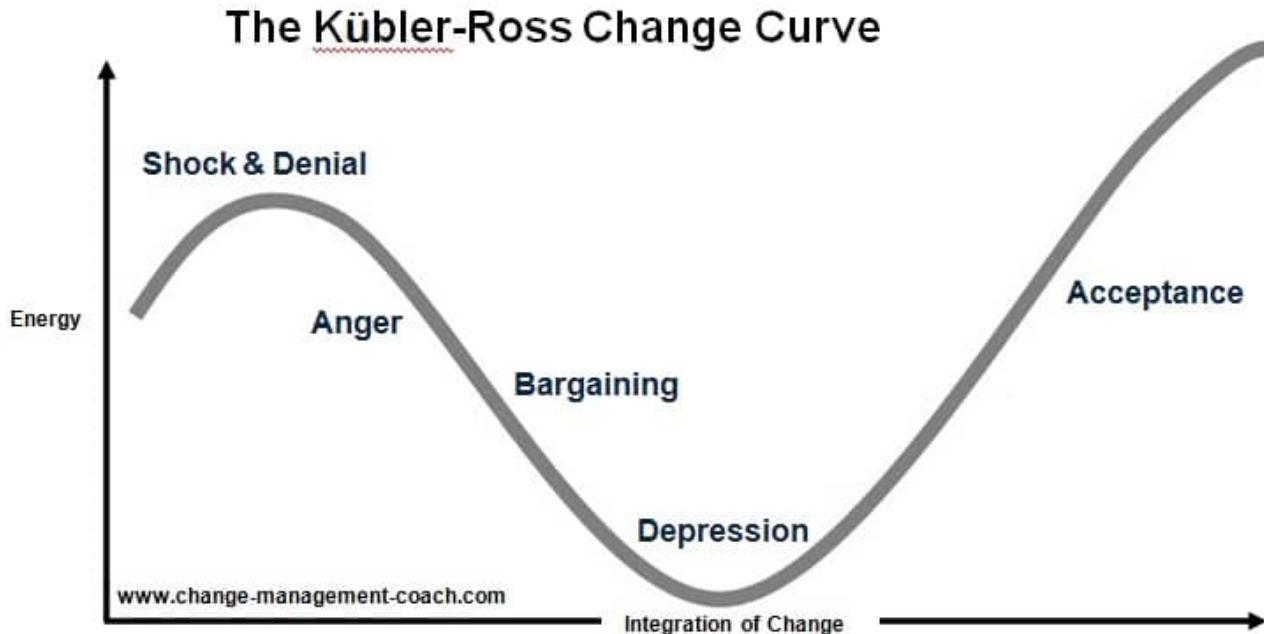
Process of embedding accessibility requires management so that:

- Improvements are sustainable
- Monitored effectively
- Meets legal & policy requirements

Not just a technical challenge!

# How can we embed accessibility within an organisation?



Top down

Bottom up
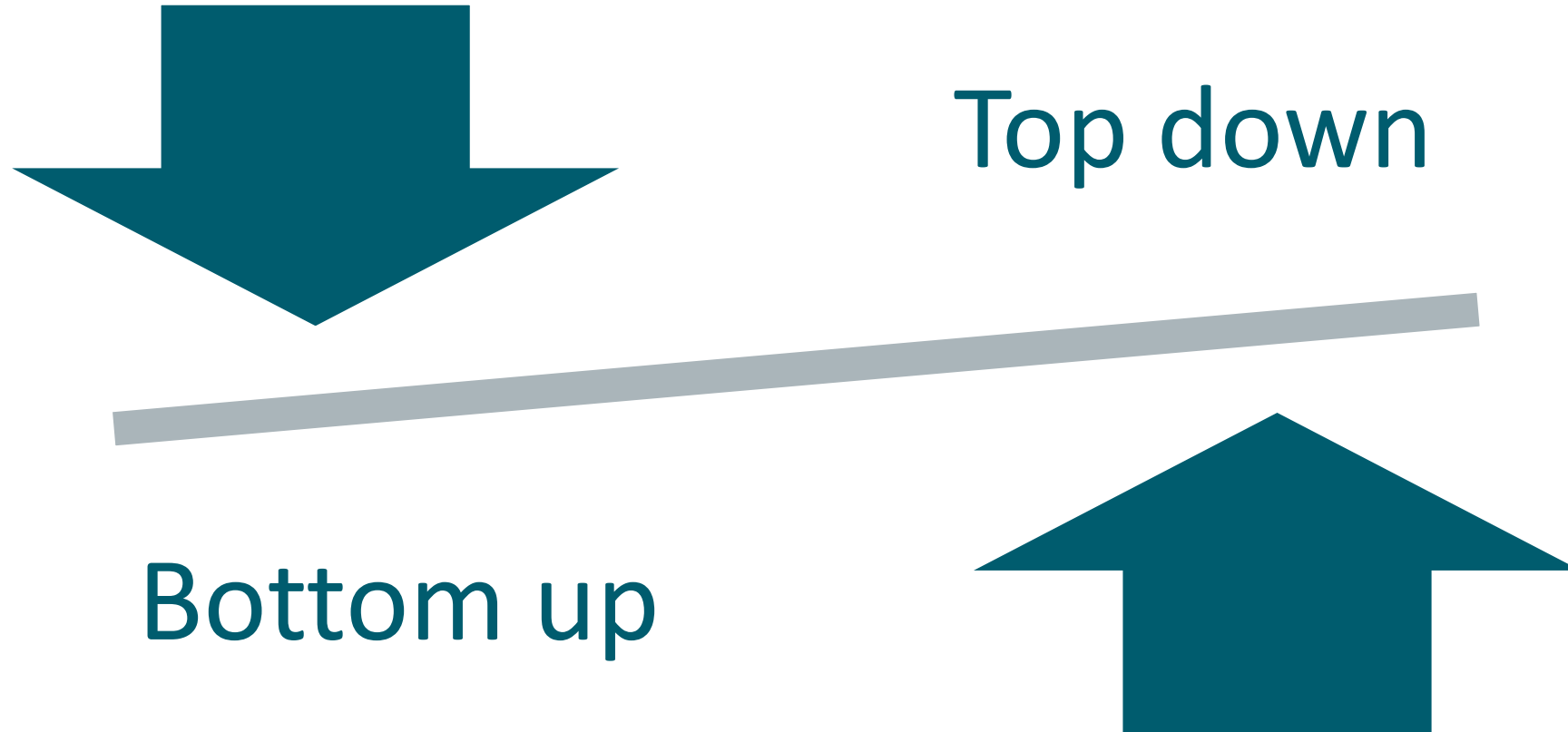
# Was is involved with organisational culture change?
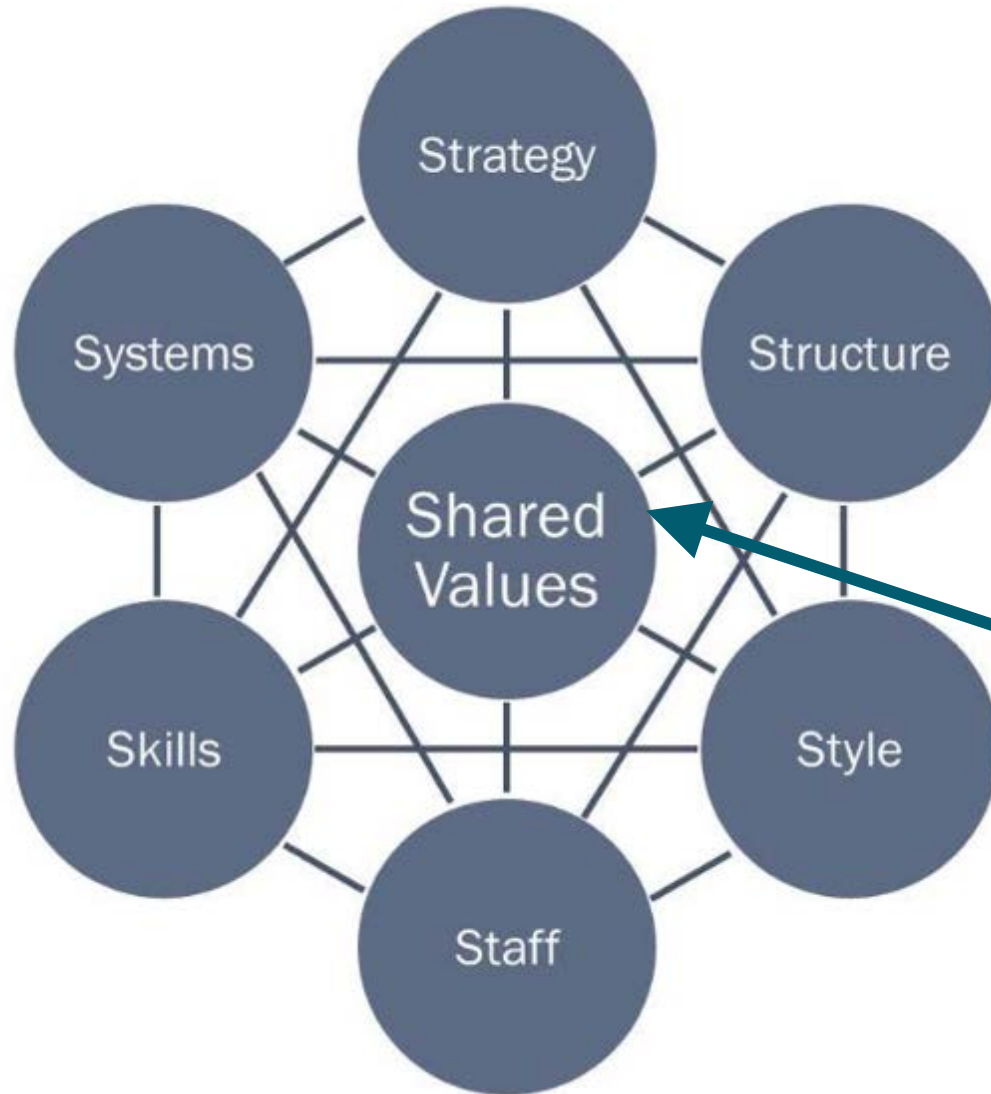


McKinsey "7 S" Framework

Each element supports each other

Set by:
- Equality Act
- Web accessibility regulations
- Organisation's inclusion policy

# Need for leadership and strategy

Forrester/Microsoft (2016) identified 5 key actions for public and private sector organizations to boost the adoption of accessible technologies.

- Ensure clear executive leadership for accessibility initiatives.

- Showcase success of accessibility initiatives.

- Build partnerships with key stakeholders.

- Learn from peers in your sector and in others.

- Put accessibility criteria into your technology procurement process.

**Organisations recognised a wide range of benefits from having an accessibility strategy.**

"How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

Our accessibility strategy helps us to meet legal and regulatory requirements pertaining to people with disabilities — Private sector 91%, Public sector 87%

Our accessibility strategy helps us to retain employees who become temporarily or permanently disabled — Private sector 90%, Public sector 82%

Our accessibility strategy enables a more diverse workforce — Private sector 87%, Public sector 82%
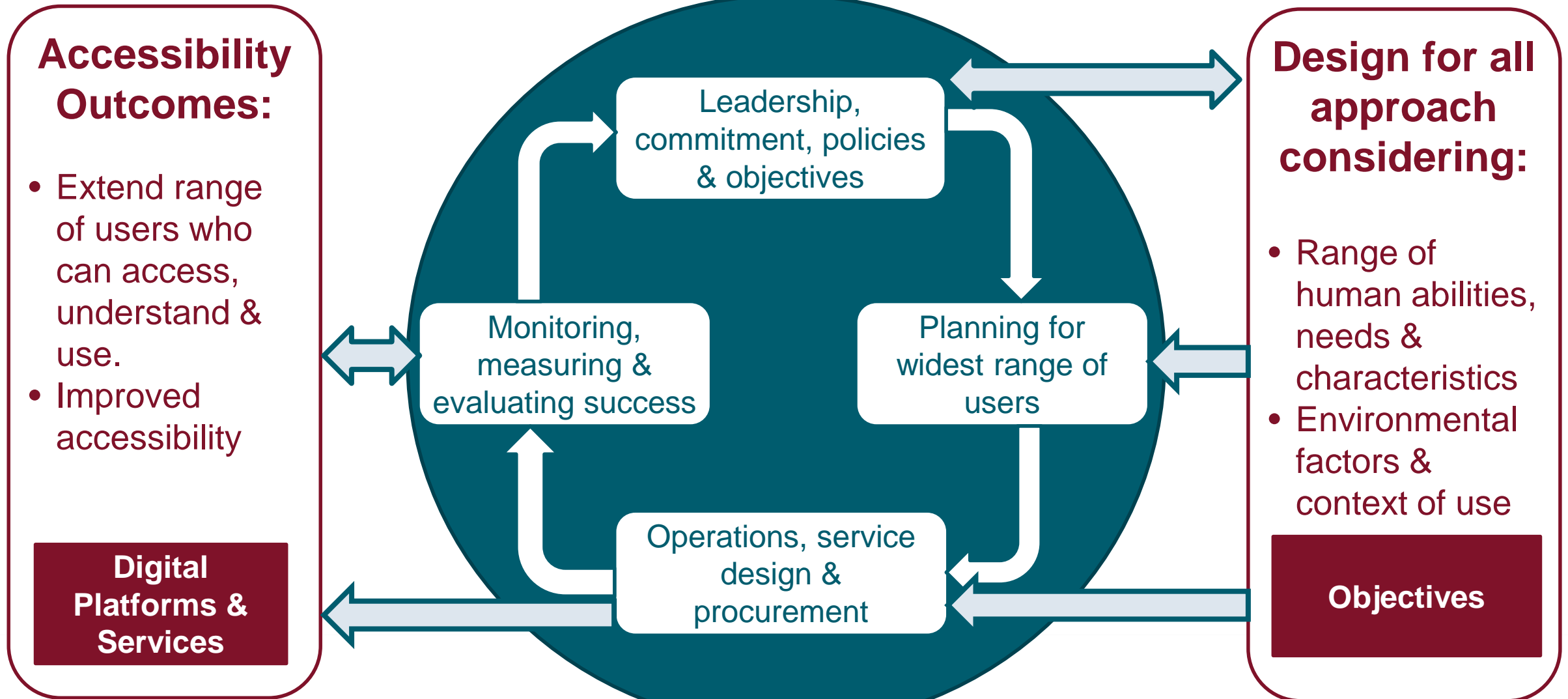
We value the contribution to society that our accessibility strategy provides — Private sector 86%, Public sector 57%

Our accessibility strategy helps us articulate a social vision for our company — Private sector 85%, Public sector 77%

Our accessibility strategy enables us to reach a wider pool of workers when we are hiring for jobs — Private sector 85%, Public sector 69%

Our brand benefits from our company's approach to accessibility for people with disabilities — Private sector 83%, Public sector 69%

Our accessibility strategy has improved our customers' satisfaction with our company's offering — Private sector 82%, Public sector 54%

Our accessibility strategy raises morale among our employees — Private sector 81%, Public sector 74%

By addressing accessibility for people with disabilities, we can create workforce solutions to make employees without disabilities more productive — Private sector 80%, Public sector 74%

Our accessibility strategy helps employees address situational disabilities: i.e., driving — Private sector 79%, Public sector 54%

Private sector
Public sector

AbilityNet

[Assessing the impact of accessible technology on organisations (Forrester/Microsoft, 2016)](#)

Base: 319 accessibility business and technology leaders from organizations across Europe

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, March 2016

# Design for all approach

**AbilityNet**

**Accessibility Outcomes:**

- Extend range of users who can access, understand & use.
- Improved accessibility

**Digital Platforms & Services**



Leadership, commitment, policies & objectives

Planning for widest range of users

Operations, service design & procurement

Monitoring, measuring & evaluating success

**Design for all approach considering:**

- Range of human abilities, needs & characteristics
- Environmental factors & context of use

**Objectives**

Based on EN 17161 Design for All standard

# Bottom up - the groundwork for accessibility success:

**AbilityNet**

1. Develop <u>accessibility champions</u> to lead peer-to-peer training

2. Use the expertise you already have to understand & prioritise issues

   - Disabled staff and students
   - Disability services
   - User research

   } Diverse user testing

3. Ensure accessibility business cases & inclusive user stories are available for anyone

# Is it possible for universities to achieve accessibility standards?

AbilityNet

# Yes!

- Other countries have placed this requirement on universities

- Recognise that it requires resources and planning

- But remember accessibility is a journey