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Dear Deputy Costello

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the number of staff in the HSE with training or experience in universal design.

[HSE Digital](#) are responsible for the development of the HSE website and content for the public on the HSE website. The area of 'universal design' is an integral part of the work of the 'HSE Digital accessibility and inclusion' project team.

The project team includes a number of qualified and experienced user experience designers and content designers. Both these disciplines have a significant focus on universal design and creating accessible online content and user experiences.

The team have also had specific training in universal design from 'InterAccess' - Ireland's leading accessibility consultancy. InterAccess is a partner agency of the National Disability Authority, the monitoring body for the [European Union \(Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies\) Regulations 2020](#)

The HSE Digital accessibility and inclusion project is committed to making digital content that is accessible to everyone who needs it. This means it can be used by as many people as possible.

This includes people with:

- impaired vision
- motor difficulties
- cognitive impairments or learning disabilities
- deafness or hard of hearing

To achieve this, HSE Digital has produced internal [accessibility guidelines for creating and publishing digital content on HSE.ie](#). These guidelines have been created to ensure content is accessible to people with disabilities.

To meet legal obligations, as outlined in the European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020, all content published on the HSE website has to meet the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard as a minimum](#).

HSE Digital has published a new and comprehensive [accessibility statement](#) on its new website. This statement includes information about:

- Compliance status
- Current areas of non-accessible content
- How accessibility is tested
- How to report accessibility problems
- Enforcement procedures

In 2020, the project team has had a number of meetings and discussions with representatives from the National Disability Authority (NDA) and The National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) in relation to creating accessible content for people with disabilities.

Other specific actions and skills initiatives taken by HSE Digital and the project team in relation to universal design since 2020 include:

- Establishing a project team that meets regularly to ensure digital content is accessible to everyone
- An independent audit of the HSE website from an accessibility and universal design perspective - this was conducted by the The National Council for the Blind of Ireland and it identified a series of actions from this audit
- Section specific internal accessibility audits using specialist software
- Developing guidelines for creating and publishing accessible PDFs
- The design and implementation of accessible website templates
- Scheduled accessibility audits of the website and updates to the accessibility statements
- Staff and internal stakeholder accessibility presentations and communications outlining the accessibility guidelines relating to new requirements for publishing content
- Conducting user interviews with different disability and vulnerable groups to get a better understanding of user needs
- Upskilling by engaging with national and international accessibility and inclusivity specific webinars and workshops
- Identified solutions for creating and publishing accessible video content
- Developing processes for publishing accessible social media content

I trust this addresses your question. If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,



Mary Brodie

Communications Directorate

