OYNK

WEB ACCESSIBILITY × DIGITAL SUSTAINABILITY

Accessibility is sustainability.

Learner journeys, equal access and digital waste.

Ashley John
Founder, OYNK

SS4FE · Northampton College
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ESSENTIAL FOR SOME, USEFUL FOR ALL

Who accessibility is for

Disabled learners

Blind, deaf, physical, cognitive and neurodivergent learners. For them, it's essential.

Learners new to English

ESOL learners and their families: plain words, clear structure, captions.

A temporary injury

A broken wrist, an eye infection, recovering from an operation.

A difficult moment

Sun on a phone screen, a noisy bus, a baby in one arm.

Older or shared tech

Old phones, shared devices, pay-as-you-go data, patchy signal.

Less confident users

Parents, carers, adult returners and anyone less confident online.

Accessibility removes barriers for anyone a website shuts out.

Based on W3C Web Accessibility Initiative guidance

TEN COLLEGES · SAME SCAN · 9 OCTOBER 2026

We scanned 10 college websites

10/10
failed automated WCAG 2.2 AA checks

10/10
had focus outlines below the 3:1 contrast WCAG asks for

5/10
lost keyboard focus on the way to a course, an open day or an application

7/10
above the EcoPigs median for carbon per homepage load

Homepages ranged from 0.10 g to 1.28 g CO_2e per load, and from 1.7 MB to 23.7 MB on a phone. Only 3 of the 10 could be verified as green-hosted.

Includes every college here today, and some others. No names: each college can have its own results on request.

PEER audits: 7 matching pages each, desktop and mobile



ONE WAY OF BUILDING

The same fixes serve people and the planet

What good looks like	For people	For carbon
Real buttons, headings and landmarks	Keyboards and screen readers can make sense of the page	Less script rebuilding what the browser already does
Lighter pages, fewer third-party scripts	Faster on older phones and slow connections	Less data and processing per page
Links that work	People reach the right course first time	Fewer requests that deliver nothing

One way of building, not two projects. Good design delivers both.



FINDING A COURSE AND APPLYING

A learner trying to apply

FINDING A COURSE

Course search boxes and filters: Tab in and no outline, border or highlight appears

APPLYING

A course picker on an application form, and apply buttons in site headers

OPEN DAYS

Open-day booking and registration buttons

Who this affects

People who use a keyboard or switch instead of a mouse

People with low vision who follow the focus



Illustration: a faint focus ring and a clear one

Colleges are covered by the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018. GDS monitors against WCAG 2.2 AA.

KEYBOARD AND SCREEN-READER ROUTES

Getting past the navigation

Keyboard users

4 of the 10 colleges had no skip link on any page we tested, so keyboard users Tab through the whole header on every page.

Screen-reader users

Can jump by region or heading. At 5 of the 10, some pages were missing a main region, a main heading or other landmarks.

WCAG 2.4.1: A WAY TO BYPASS REPEATED BLOCKS

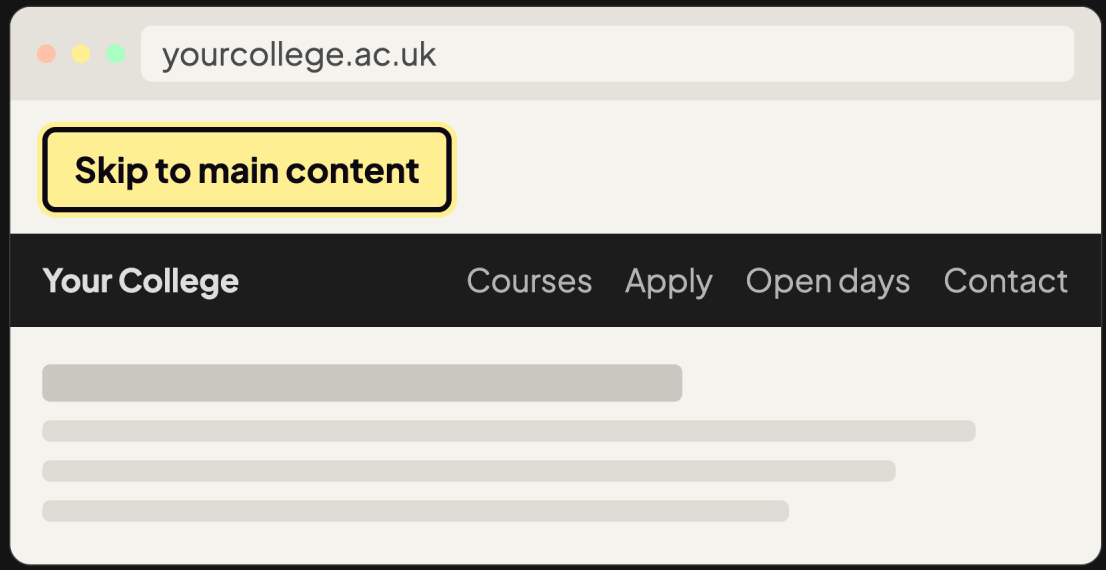


Illustration: a skip link appears on the first press of Tab.

SITEMAP CHECK · 8–9 OCTOBER 2026

Some journeys fail altogether

412

of 7,077 sitemap addresses returned an error, checked in a browser

- 7 of the 8 colleges with a sitemap had broken addresses
- 2 returned server errors, not just “not found”
- 2 publish no sitemap at all

The broken addresses include course pages, and nursery and childcare pages.

Sitemap addresses, not necessarily pages linked from the live sites.

CARBON PER HOMEPAGE LOAD

Better performance is achievable

0.32 g

median per homepage load, ten colleges

EcoPigs median across 608 sites: 0.18 g

13×

gap between the lightest and heaviest college homepage

0.10 g to 1.28 g per load

0.011 g

median of ten smaller sites OYNK built in 2026

Range 0.002–0.035 g, all on green hosting

Biggest single cause: oversized images. Photos sent at up to five times the width they're shown, and one 6.3 MB screenshot.

Not like-for-like: a college site carries far more pages, forms and systems. OYNK figures are delivered work, not a promise for any one site.

EcoPigs estimates, CO_2e per page load

NEXT STEPS

What colleges should require

01	**Protect the critical journeys**	Finding a course, checking support, applying. Test them with a keyboard and a screen reader.
02	**Test regularly**	Automated checks on every release. Manual testing, including with disabled people, on a schedule.
03	**Put it in the brief**	WCAG 2.2 AA, a performance budget, and redirects and sitemap upkeep when courses change.

Every learner, disabled or not, deserves an equitable chance to find a course and apply.

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REFERENCE · NOT PRESENTED

Reference material

Supporting detail for questions and follow-up: the page-by-page audit findings and notes on how the evidence was gathered.

REFERENCE · NOT PRESENTED

Ten colleges, anonymised

College	g CO_2e per homepage load	Focus lost (Tab test)	Focus outline below 3:1	Text contrast below 4.5:1	Skip link	Sitemap errors	Green hosting verified
A	0.10	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	25 of 530	Yes
B	0.15	–	Yes	Yes	–	No sitemap	Yes
C	0.15	–	Yes	–	Missing	1 of 1,758	–
D	0.22	Yes	Yes	–	–	2 of 241	–
E	0.25	–	Yes	Yes	–	3 of 801	Yes
F	0.40	Yes	Yes	–	Missing	100 of 897	–
G	0.47	Yes	Yes	Yes	Missing	92 of 929	–
H	0.53	Yes	Yes	Yes	Missing	189 of 1,362	–
I	1.20	–	Yes	–	–	0 of 559	–
J	1.28	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	No sitemap	–

Ordered by carbon, lowest first. Letters are not linked to names. Automated checks; flagged items need manual confirmation.

REFERENCE · NOT PRESENTED

Notes on the evidence

Accessibility	Ten PEER audits, PEER-2026–772 to 781, 9 Oct 2026: the same 7 page types per college, desktop and mobile (axe-core 4.11, OYNK rules, scripted Tab test). Automated checks, not full WCAG audits.
Not counted	A CAPTCHA flag (3.3.8 covers log-ins), a fading button's contrast and "Photo of" alt text.
Sitemap	Every address in each college's sitemap fetched in a browser, failures rechecked, 8 to 9 October 2026: 412 errors across 7,077 addresses at 8 colleges. Two colleges publish no sitemap.
Carbon	EcoPigs estimates per homepage load, not per visit. Median 0.18 g across 608 EcoPigs-scanned sites. OYNK figures: EcoPigs dashboard, Sept 2026, two of ten estimated.
Status	Technical evidence of barriers to equal access. Not a legal determination.