Accessibility Debt

What is it for?

Accessibility debt is like technical debt, but for accessibility. It refers to all the accessibility issues that build up over time when inclusive practices aren't followed from the start. Just like tech debt, the longer it's left unmanaged, the harder (and more expensive) it becomes to fix.

How to support it

You don't choose to take on accessibility debt. It builds up when things like semantic HTML, alt text, proper labels, or keyboard navigation are skipped or broken.

Here's how to manage or 'pay it off':

- Run regular accessibility audits (manual and automated)
- Add accessibility issues to your backlog and track them like bugs
- Prioritise fixes that block user journeys (e.g. login, forms, navigation)
- Fix inaccessible components in your design system
- Include accessibility in your development and design workflow to prevent new debt

Useful links

- Understanding Accessibility Debt: What It Is and How to Manage It
- Accessibility Debt Is Real — Here's How to Prevent It
- Accessibility Debt: What Happens When You Do Accessibility Last