Accessibility Testing

What is it for?

Accessibility Testing is the process of checking a digital product to ensure it can be used by people with disabilities. Its purpose is to find and fix barriers before your users do.

Without testing, you are only guessing if your product works for everyone. This can lead to significant problems:

- People using screen readers or keyboards are blocked from completing tasks
- Users with disabilities face a broken or frustrating product
- Your product may fail to meet legal requirements, many of which refer to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- Problems found after launch are much harder and more expensive to fix

How to support it

A good strategy combines three types of testing:

1. Automated Testing
    - This is software that scans code for common, machine-detectable issues
    - It can be used to quickly find problems like low colour contrast or missing form labels
    - However, it only finds approximately 30% of issues. It can't check if the user experience is logical, for instance
2. Manual Testing
    - This is when a human checks the product against accessibility criteria
    - It can be used to find issues that automation misses. Key checks include keyboard-only navigation (can you Tab to everything?) and screen reader testing (does it make sense when read aloud?)
3. User Testing (with people with disabilities)
    - This is the gold standard. Observing people with a range of disabilities as they try to complete tasks on your product
    - It can be used to find real-world usability barriers that technical checks miss. It's the only way to know if your product is truly usable

Useful links

- Best Practices for Accessibility Testing - A Comprehensive Guide
- The Importance Of Manual Accessibility Testing
- Accessibility Testing: How It Works and Why It's Important