Consistency

What is it for?

Think about your favourite supermarket. You know roughly where everything is, and even if you visit a different branch, the layout follows the same pattern. Now imagine if every time you visited, the dairy aisle had moved, the signage used different words, and the tills were in a completely different spot. Even for someone with no disabilities, that would be exhausting and disorienting.

Digital products work the same way. When navigation, buttons, and labels behave consistently across every page, users can build a mental map of the product and move around it confidently. When things shift unexpectedly, that mental map falls apart.

This matters most for people with cognitive or learning disabilities, memory difficulties, ADHD, anxiety or dyslexia. For these users, inconsistency is not just annoying. It can make a product genuinely unusable.

Consistency is something to take into account as part of day-to-day work.

How to support it

Consistency is a shared responsibility across every discipline.

- Designers can ensure the same components are used for the same actions across every screen. If a primary button is yellow on one page, it should be yellow on every page.
- Content writers can use the same labels for the same things throughout a product. Calling something 'Sign in' on one page and 'Log in' on another creates unnecessary confusion.
- Developers can build from a shared component library, so the same element always looks and works the same way. This is better than rebuilding it from scratch each time.

Small inconsistencies that feel trivial to one person can be a significant barrier to another. Think of a menu that moves between pages, a button that changes its label

halfway through a journey, or an icon that means different things in different places. Together, these make a product that users can't learn or predict.

Useful links

- Understanding SC 3.2.3: Consistent Navigation (Level AA)
- Making Content Usable for People with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities