QR Codes

What is it for?

A QR (Quick Response) code is a type of two-dimensional barcode. It's a machine-scannable image that a smartphone camera can read to bridge the gap between a physical item and a digital resource.

QR codes are used to store information for a device to read instantly. Common uses include:

- Opening a website
- Connecting to a Wi-Fi network
- Making a payment
- Downloading an app

While QR codes can help users with motor or cognitive disabilities by removing the need to type long uniform resource locators (URLs), they create significant barriers if not implemented carefully. These barriers include:

- Users who are blind or have low vision cannot easily locate or scan a QR code
- Poor placement can make codes unreachable for wheelchair users
- A standard code provides no information about its destination before being scanned
- Low-contrast colours or small sizes make codes difficult to see and scan

How to support it

To ensure your QR code is accessible, you must provide alternatives and context.

- Always include a short, readable URL (e.g., AbiHarrisonNye.dev/talks) and a clear description of the link's purpose next to the code
- Use high-contrast colours (dark on light), a large size (at least 1 inch x 1 inch), and place it at a height reachable by all users

If you can avoid using a QR code, you should. Here are a few alternatives:

- Short URLs - A simple, memorable link is often the most inclusive option

- NFC Tags - These allow users to tap their phone instead of aiming a camera, which is far easier
- Accessible QR (AQR) codes - A new technology that uses special patterns to help apps guide visually impaired users to the code

Useful links

- Accessibility and QR codes
- What is an Accessible QR (AQR) code?
- Making QR codes more accessible
- Are QR Codes Accessible for People with Disabilities?
- Accessible QR Codes – The Ultimate Guide