



WEBSITE COMPLIANCE

GOOD GOVERNANCE

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

WHAT TO INCLUDE

All websites used for commercial purposes must adhere to rules set out under UK and EU law and there are consequences of failing to comply.

Unless you were living under a rock, you can't have failed to have heard about GDPR, which extended existing data protection legislation.

Your website should focus on the following areas when it comes to your online visitors:

- safety of their personal and financial data
- ease of accessibility
- ability to enforce their legal rights when buying online

Websites of organisations registered in the UK need to display the Company Information.

This includes the business name, place of registration, registered number, registered office address and if it is a member of a trade association.

For sole traders and partnerships, the address of the main place of business must be displayed.



LEGAL STUFF

Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act, you must make sure your content is available to all users, such as people who are visually impaired. Failure to comply may be considered 'unlawful disability discrimination'.

You can usually download an accessibility plugin for this. Be sure to use the Alt Text option when you upload photos. It's good for your SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) rankings too. Double win!

Data Protection Act 2018 & General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

A Privacy Policy or data protection notice must be displayed on your website if you process visitor data and must inform the user what the data will be used for and that it is compliant with GDPR.

If you process people's personal data e.g. through online forms or newsletters, then you must also register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). This is a simple process and costs £35 per year. Just head to <https://ico.org.uk> and follow the instructions.

Ensure that your email lists are made up of 'opt-in' email addresses, and always include an 'opt-out' instruction on all marketing emails. There's another good reason for doing this – by having people's permission, they want you to message them and you are not wasting time or money on a large 'vanity list'.

The Privacy Policy should explain what cookies will be created and their purpose. This requirement is less strict so you can either include it in your Privacy Policy or use a generic Cookies plugin for this purpose.

Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations and Electronic Commerce Regulations (EC Directive) 2002

If your website has an eCommerce function, your Terms and Conditions, along with a Delivery and Returns Policy are a required. Many website platforms such as Wordpress offer these as a plugin, which you can tailor to your needs.

These terms must state: information such as:

- Identity of the supplier and address
- A description of the service
- The contract price inclusive of taxes
- Payment and delivery arrangements (& delivery costs, if applicable)
- Notification of the right of cancellation e.g. cooling-off period
- The cost of the means of communication by which the contract is to be concluded e.g. Premium Rate numbers
- The period for which the terms are available
- Minimum duration of the contract, where it is not a one-off arrangement
- Written confirmation of their order
- The technical means for a customer to correct any mistake in an order before completing their purchase, and
- Whether the contract will be permanently filed and whether it can be accessed by the customer

THIS ISN'T OPTIONAL - DON'T BREAK THE LAW!

OTHER WEBSITE STUFF

SSL Certificates

SSL stands for Secure Sockets Layer. It sounds complicated but it's not, honestly!

SSL is the technology used to keep an internet connection secure and safeguards sensitive information (such as credit card numbers and other financial information, names and addresses) that is being sent between two systems.

It scrambles the data that is sent between two systems (yours and your website visitor's), making the data remain impossible to read by hackers.

If keeping your data (and that of your clients) data safe isn't enough of an incentive, you should know that Google started penalising sites without it from 2016, ramped this up in 2017 and is now actively flagging up sites without it. You'll know which ones don't as you'll either see a warning message, an unlocked padlock or the circled information symbol ⓘ.

If you don't have an SSL certificate (N.B it's not a physical certificate but rather you will see https:// rather than http:// before your website URL), some unscrupulous web developers might tell you it will cost around £100 to set this up for you. Nope! Not generally.

Most hosting providers include SSL certificates in your hosting package. If you don't have the tech skills yourself, or the support of your provider, many freelancers will charge around £30 p.h and it will take them less than an hour to set it up for you.

These are activities that you mostly only have to review once a year so get them ticked off your list, getting expert help where needed, and rest assured that your website is safe, transparent, and above all, legally compliant.

