Making Word Documents Accessible

Word documents and PDFs (usually made from Word document originals) on public websites like ours have to conform to accessibility standards.

To achieve this, items 1-7 below are 'must haves' in any Word documents:

When the Word document is saved as a PDF these features carry through, creating an accessible, compliant document.

1. Identify documents

All LCC documents should be identifiable and not 'anonymous'. As a minimum include your organisations' name at the top of the first page in Normal style.

If you add a logo image set the Alt text: right-click on logo > Format picture > Alt text should be included (e.g. "Leicestershire County Council logo").

2. Document Title and Author

Go to the File tab. By default you should see the Info tab. In the right-hand column provide a meaningful Title for the document. Add tags (keywords) if you wish.

For **Author** add 'Leicestershire County Council' and remove person names if shown (right-click on name > Remove Person).
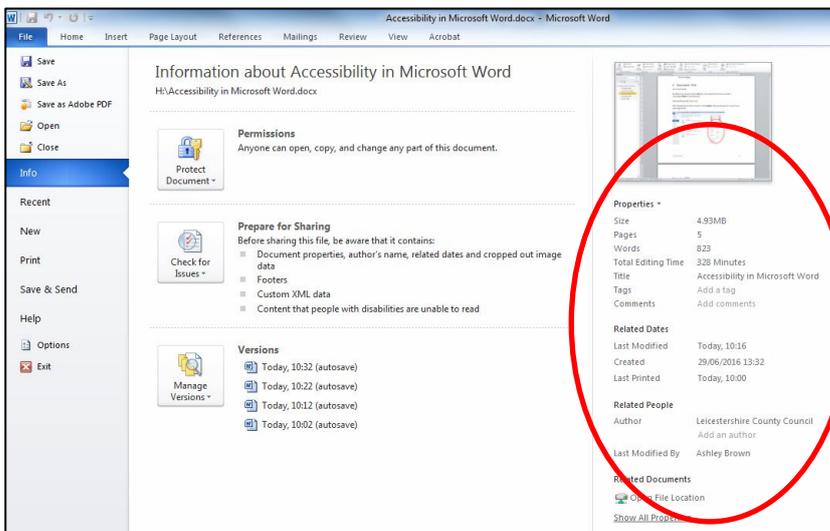
3. Use Heading Styles

Use the Heading styles in Word to create a hierarchy of a title and sub-headings. To see your document structure click the View menu > tick Navigation Pane.

They are used by Word to make a hyperlinked Table of Contents and they convert to bookmarks in PDFs, making the document accessible.

Heading styles are also a great way to speed up editing – by modifying a style all text set to that style will automatically update with the modifications.
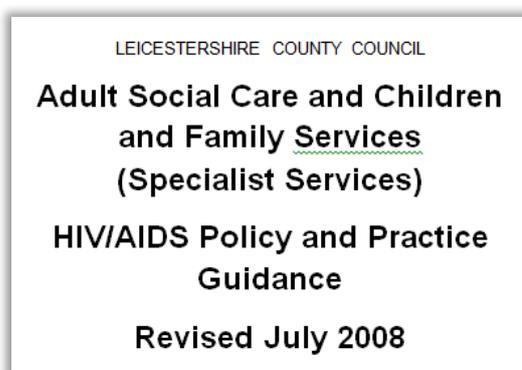
For consistency ie use **Arial** font in colour **black**.

After applying a style to some text you can add any other styling changes 'on top' using the buttons in the Font and Paragraph palettes.

Main title as Heading 1

The **main title** of the document (on the cover or page 1) should be set to 'Heading 1' (aka H1). There should only be one Heading 1 in a document.

In this example the only part that is the actual title (Heading 1) is "HIV/AIDS Policy and Practice Guidance". The rest can be set to Normal style and then individual styles applied as desired.

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services (Specialist Services)

HIV/AIDS Policy and Practice Guidance

Revised July 2008

Shift+Enter for line breaks:
Move words onto a new line to avoid awkward looking titles, without creating multiple H1s. Example – using shift+enter after "during":

Encouraging residents during Zero Waste Week

Encouraging residents during Zero Waste Week
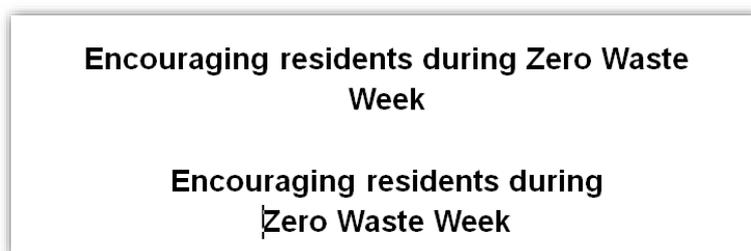
Headings and sub-headings

Main headings throughout the document should be 'Heading 2' (aka H2), sub-headings Heading 3, then Heading 4 etc, always in the right order to maintain a proper hierarchy (don't go from H2 to H4).

Select the text you want to be a heading, click once on that style in the Styles palette.

To ensure a heading appears at the top of a new page, **don't add blank lines** to fill out space, place the cursor at the beginning of the heading, go to Insert > Page Break or click Ctrl+Return.

Body text

The Normal style is the default or use Body Text style for body text. Modify the style to add paragraph spacing to create white space instead of adding blank lines. **Don't add blank lines**. A good rule of thumb is to set spacing before to zero, spacing after to 10pt.

Add your own new styles

If there is a style of formatting you are repeating a lot in a document, to save time add it as a style. This can be done in two ways:

1. Select the paragraph of text you have formatted > Right click on it > Styles > Save Selection as a New Quick Style

2. Select the paragraph of text you have formatted > open the styles window
   > click the New Style button
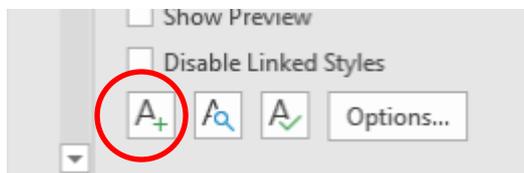
Modifying styles

Get them looking how you want them, adhering to guidelines. When you modify a style it changes all text in that document that is set to that style – a very quick and easy way to make modifications document-wide.

Right-click on the style in the Styles palette > select Modify.

Every aspect can be changed – click the **Format** button for more options: select **Paragraph** to set line spacing and add white space before and after the text.

Also see 'Update to Match Selection'. Apply styling settings to a piece of text using Font and Paragraph buttons, select the text and apply those settings to a style in the Styles palette.
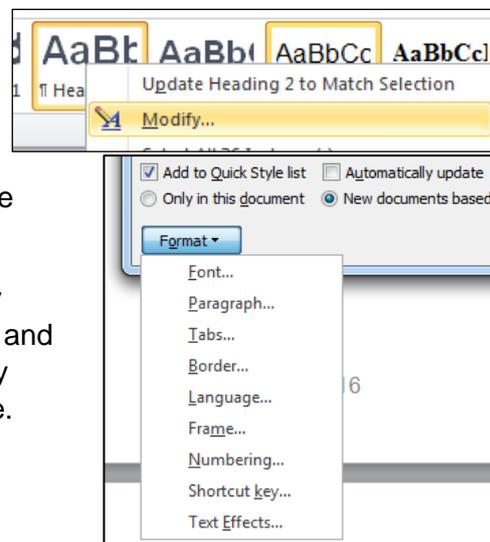

To keep your style settings for new documents you could do a 'Save as' or: File > New > New from existing.

Copy and paste styles from another document:
If you have a set of styles that you're happy with in another document, copy a portion of text from that document, including headings and sub-headings, paste into the new document. The styles should transfer across. You can then remove the copied text.

4. Alt Text for images
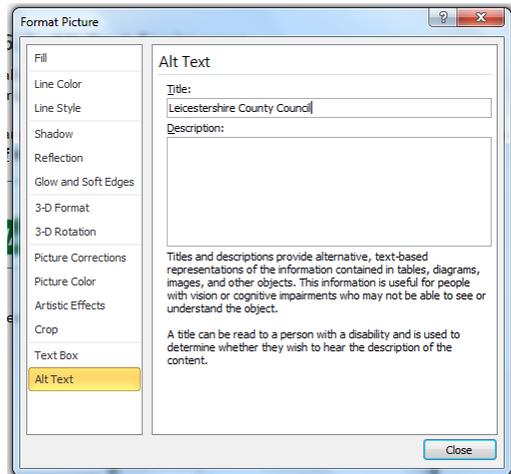
All images in a document (including lines, arrows, boxes) should have descriptive Alt Text. Clipart is strongly discouraged.

Right-click on the image > Format picture > Alt Text tab – add a **Title.** A brief description is optional. Example:

5. No blank lines

Use paragraph spacing instead of adding blank lines. Set your desired before and after paragraph spacing directly into the styles you're using.

Standard settings for the 'Normal' style, which should be used for body text are:

- Right-click on the style in the Styles palette > select Modify: Arial, colour black. Set size and alignment as desired.
- Click the Format button > Paragraph > 10pt for Spacing: After; Line spacing at 1.

There's a quick way to remove blank lines from the whole document.

6. Contextual hyperlinks

In most cases the link url (website address) should not be on show, it should be behind some hyperlinked text (the clickable text) which provides context – use key words in a phrase that describes what the link is and/or where the link is going:

☒ Leicestershire Police have issued advice reminding people to remain vigilant. To report possible terrorist activity, click here.

Leicestershire Police: how to report possible terrorist activity: https://leics.police.uk/advice-and-information/information-zone/terrorism

☑ Leicestershire Police have issued advice reminding people to remain vigilant. Visit the police website for [how to report possible terrorist activity](#).

The exception to the rule is if you are promoting awareness of a website or link:

For further information, and how to apply, visit [leicestershire.gov.uk/community-grants](#)

7. Create a Table of Contents

If the document is long enough to require a Contents page, insert one after your cover page. Microsoft Word will create one based on the heading styles used in the document, and it will put in hyperlinks to those sections.

Go to References tab > Table of Contents >

- Select an Automatic Table, or
- Choose 'Insert Table of Contents…' to see more options, such as how many levels of heading to show:
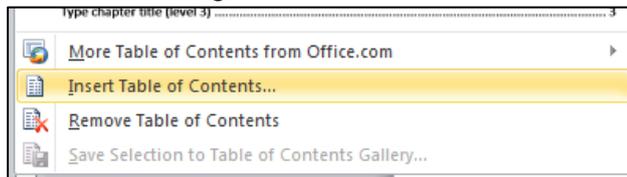
If you change the document after inserting a ToC, click anywhere in the ToC and select Update Table > Update entire table OR Update page numbers only.

You can edit the text and style of the ToC and remove entries. Top tips:

- Take care selecting lines of the ToC as it is easy to select the whole thing.
- Edit the styling last – every time you 'Update entire table', Word resets them.

8. Tables for data only

Only use tables for data, not for layout**.** Use tabs or columns with column breaks.

Using tabs for layout:

☒ Table   ☑ Paragraph indents and a tab

Using columns and column breaks:

☒ Table being used for layout

| FIGURE 1			
CATEGORIES OF ACTIVITY AND LEVELS OF APPROVAL			
CATEGORY	LEVEL OF APPROVAL	ACTIVITY	ENVIRONMENT / LOCATION
A	OVC and HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT	• Sports fixtures, within the county • School Swimming – formal teaching in life-guarded pools • Regular visits to libraries, places of worship, study support centres, local parks and open spaces, local shops etc. • Fieldwork in environments with no technical hazards. (e.g Bradgate Park, Swithland Woods, Leicester City Centre etc.) • Visits to local/city museums and Space Centre	• Local parks, residential areas and shopping areas.
B	OVC and HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT	• Full Day Visits to museums, attractions and parks some distance from the City. (Conkers, Alton Towers, Farm Visits etc.) • Theme Parks and other tourist attractions • Seaside resorts • Zoos • Ice skating • Swimming in public, lifeguarded, pools • Walking in 'normal' country • London	• Walks in '**non-remote**' country **Non-remote Country** – enclosed farmland, fields, low land forest – not moorland, mountain (above 600m) and/or where it is possible to be more than 30 mins from a road or refuge. • 'Water Margin' activity
C	OVC, HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT AND **LCC** Approval by **LCC**	• Any visit/activity involving a Residential (overnight stay) element including Camping and 'school sleep overs'. • Any visit abroad • Any visit involving 'adventurous activities', led either by a Centre, an outside provider or staff member (See Figure 2)	• Visits to hazardous environments • Overseas Expeditions • Any water-base activity • Any activity in Winter mountain conditions • Open Country/Remote terrain more than 30mins from a road (above 600m) • Near cliffs or steep terrain • Areas subject to extremes of weather or environmental change • Swimming in non-lifeguarded pools or open water

☑ Column breaks

| Figure 1: Categories of Activity and Levels of Approval			
CATEGORY	LEVEL OF APPROVAL	ACTIVITY	ENVIRONMENT / LOCATION
A	OVC and HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT	• Sports fixtures, within the county • School Swimming – formal teaching in life-guarded pools • Regular visits to libraries, places of worship, study support centres, local parks and open spaces, local shops etc. • Fieldwork in environments with no technical hazards. (e.g Bradgate Park, Swithland Woods, Leicester City Centre etc.) • Visits to local/city museums and Space Centre	• Local parks, residential areas and shopping areas.
B	OVC and HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT	• Full Day Visits to museums, attractions and parks some distance from the City. (Conkers, Alton Towers, Farm Visits etc.) • Theme Parks and other tourist attractions • Seaside resorts • Zoos • Ice skating • Swimming in public, lifeguarded, pools	• Walking in 'normal' country • London • Walks in '**non-remote**' country **Non-remote Country** – enclosed farmland, fields, low land forest – not moorland, mountain (above 600m) and/or where it is possible to be more than 30 mins from a road or refuge. • 'Water Margin' activity
C	OVC, HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT AND LCC Approval by LCC	• Any visit/activity involving a Residential (overnight stay) element including Camping and 'school sleep overs'. • Any visit abroad • Any visit involving 'adventurous activities', led either by a Centre, an outside provider or staff member (See Figure 2)	• Visits to hazardous environments • Overseas Expeditions • Any water-base activity • Any activity in Winter mountain conditions • Open Country/Remote terrain more than 30mins from a road (above 600m) • Near cliffs or steep terrain • Areas subject to extremes of weather or environmental change • Swimming in non-lifeguarded pools or open water

Select the table > Table tools menu: Layout tab > Convert to text (paragraph marks)

Put a blank line between the rows – for each one set a bottom border: Home tab > Paragraph styles:
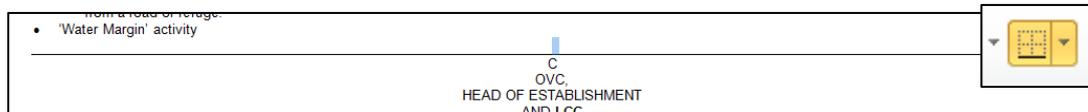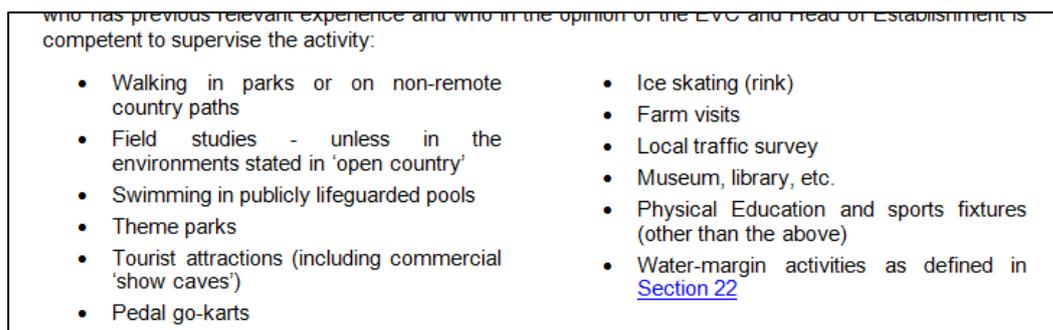

1. Select the first set of text that we want in columns, then Page layout tab > Columns > More columns.

2. Set the number of columns required (4 in this example) and reduce the spacing between columns to something like 0.6cm.

3. Only then, untick 'Equal column width' and adjust each column accordingly – in this example we want the first two columns to be narrower and to have more room in columns 3 and 4:
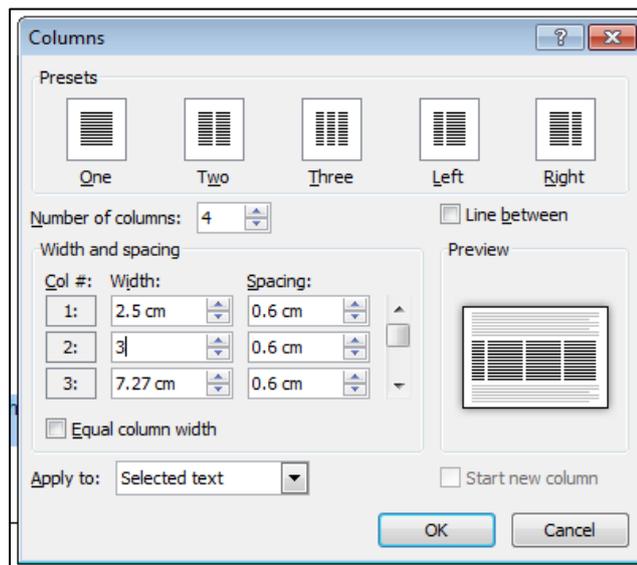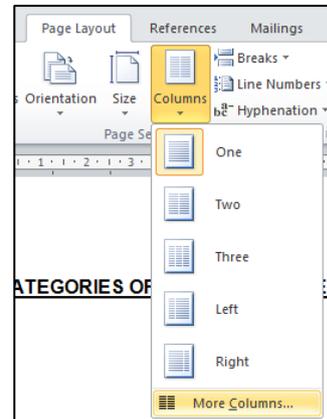
Place the cursor at the beginning (top) of each column (except the first one). Go to Page Layout tab > Breaks > Column break.

Bullet lists can also be put into columns to use up page space more efficiently:

who has previous relevant experience and who in the opinion of the EVC and Head of Establishment is competent to supervise the activity:

- Walking in parks or on non-remote country paths
- Field studies - unless in the environments stated in 'open country'
- Swimming in publicly lifeguarded pools
- Theme parks
- Tourist attractions (including commercial 'show caves')
- Pedal go-karts

- Ice skating (rink)
- Farm visits
- Local traffic survey
- Museum, library, etc.
- Physical Education and sports fixtures (other than the above)
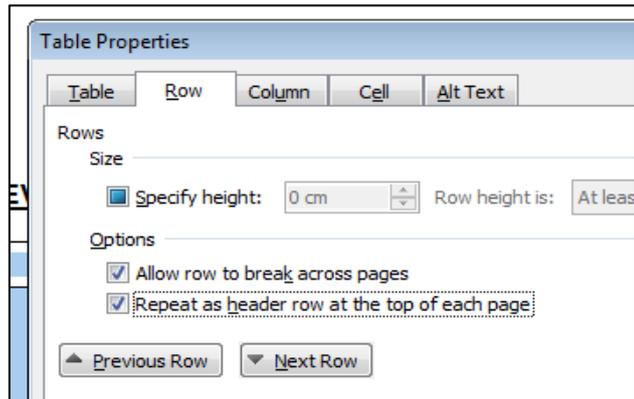- Water-margin activities as defined in Section 22

Data tables

Add Alt Text: Right-click on the table > Table Properties > Alt Text tab.

For long tables, ensure the header row (which usually contains the descriptive column headings) appears at the top of each new page:

Select the table > Right click: Table properties > Row tab > Repeat as header row at the top of each page
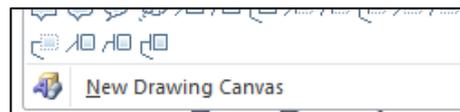

9. Drawing objects in order

Flowcharts and structure/hierarchy diagrams

For **flowcharts** with decision boxes and linked items, create a drawing canvas and insert shapes and connectors. Connectors will join to shapes if the flowchart is in a canvas:

Insert tab > Shapes > New drawing canvas

Insert tab > Shapes > Flowchart > insert the shapes of your choice. Right-click on each shape and select Add Text.

Insert tab > Shapes > Lines > insert the connectors you require. Click and drag the endpoints to a shape's connecting point, which are revealed when moving the mouse over the shape.

Microsoft Excel is good at making charts directly from data, which can then be put into Word by using copy and paste.

For **hierarchy** diagrams, go to the Insert tab > SmartArt > Hierarchy, and select the style of diagram closest to what you want – you can format the boxes later.

Each box can be dragged to other positions or aligned. Right-click on each box to format colour, lines etc.
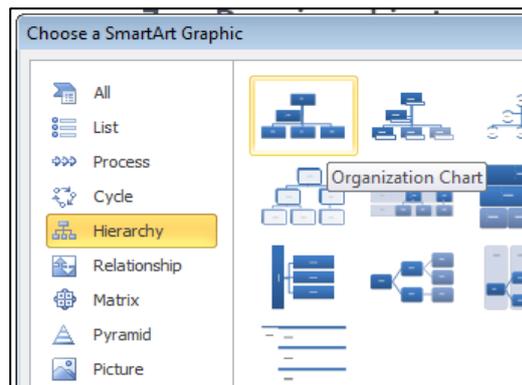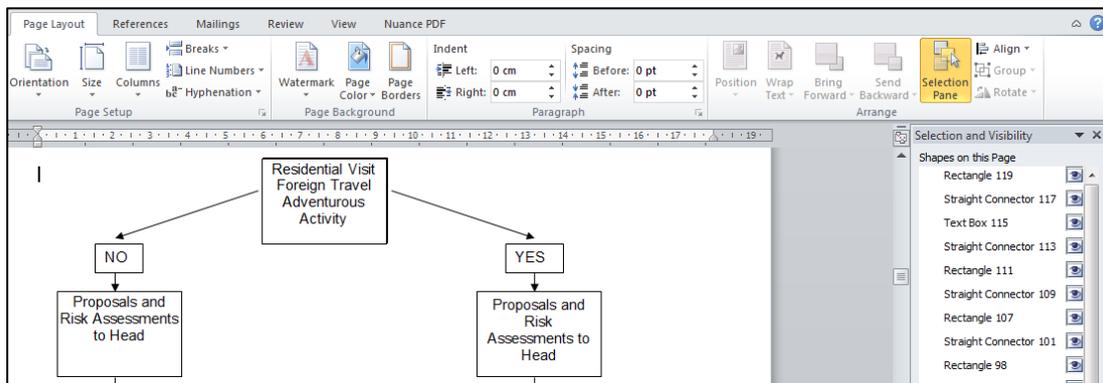
Add more boxes in the right place by using Add Shape:
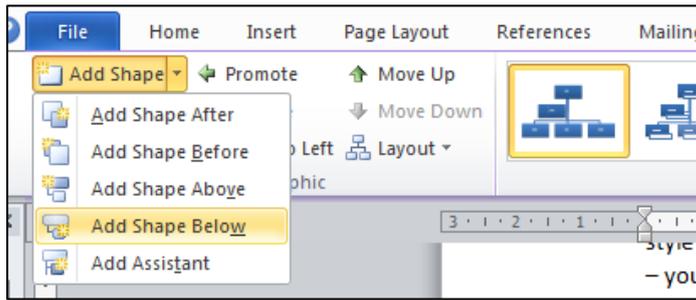
Manually created drawings and flowcharts:
Each box, line and arrow need to be arranged in order to provide a 'reading direction' for accessibility. Go to Page Layout tab > Selection Pane

10. Save as a PDF

If information can't be presented as a web page then it is usually provided as a PDF (Portable Document Format) aka Acrobat file, because PDFs are compatible with all devices, web browsers and operating systems.

To save the Word doc as a PDF, first Save your document. Then:

File tab > Save as Adobe PDF. Save the document in the normal way, or

- File tab > Save as > change file type to PDF > Click **Options** button

- Tick 'Create bookmarks'

- Ensure 'Document properties' and 'Document structure' are ticked

- Untick 'Bitmap text…'

- Click OK

Click Save.
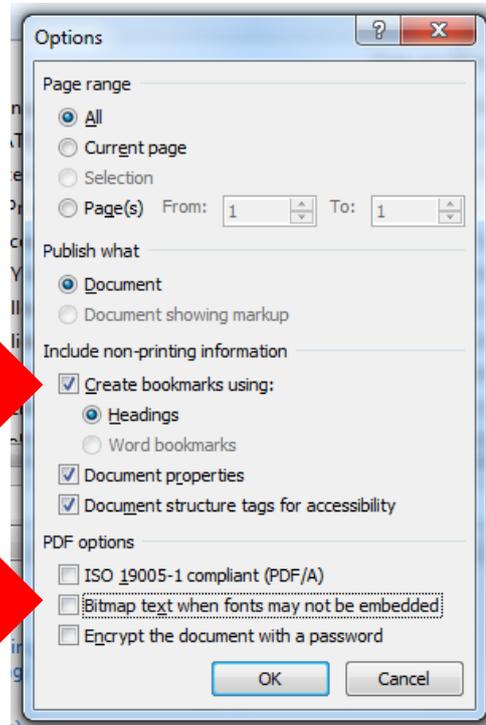
# 11. Updating old Word documents

Save as a .docx

Identify it as Organisation

Documents should be identifiable as being from your organisation, and not be 'anonymous'. As a minimum include the title of your Organisation at the top of the first page.

If the Styles palette is not showing the main styles:

- Open the palette to check if they are available in the larger view (button shown)
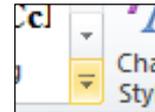
- If the main heading styles still aren't showing, click on the Style palette expander.
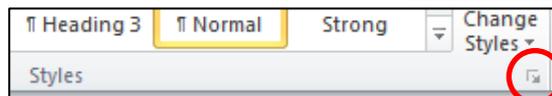
- If the main heading styles aren't there, in the Styles box click Options. Under 'Select styles to show' select All styles, tick the box for Paragraph Level Formatting, click OK.

- You can also reset the Styles palette to the template defaults if you wish. Click the Change Styles button > Style Set > Reset to Quick Styles from Template.
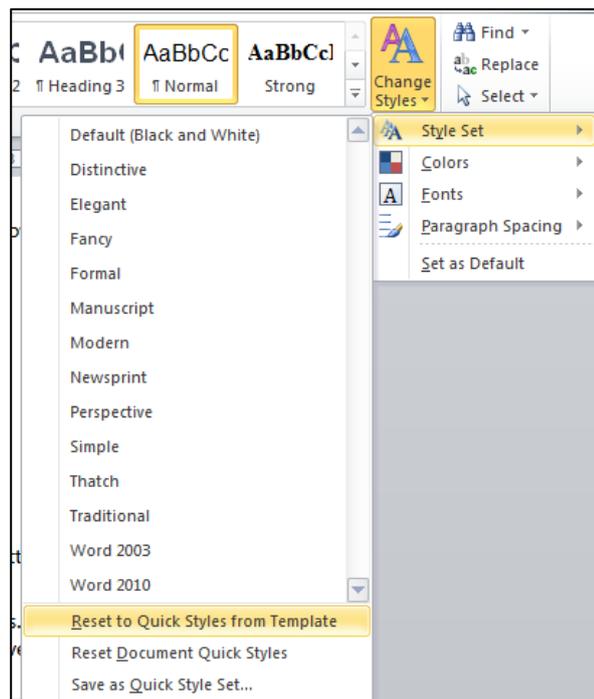
Modify 'Normal' style

Set your desired before and after paragraph spacing directly into the styles you're using, including 'Normal' which should be used for body text:

Right-click on the style in the Styles palette > select Modify > Arial, black.

Click the Format button > Paragraph > Spacing: Before 0pt, Spacing: After 10pt, Line spacing: 1.15.

Removing blank lines

This is necessary for accessibility, but there are other advantages:

- it's easy to change the paragraph spacing for the whole document at once;
- it's easy to achieve subtle paragraph spacing changes for individual paragraphs.

To remove blank lines, go to Replace > set 'Find what' to ^p^p > set 'Replace with' to ^p > click Replace All.

Some 'blank' lines have a space or tab character on them. You can copy and paste one of these lines into 'Find what', and make sure 'Replace with' is empty.

Clear styles, apply new style

In old Word docs, sometimes text retains manual styles even after you've applied a modified style from the palette.
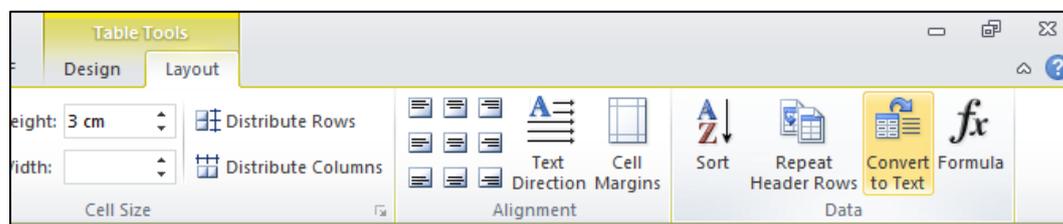

Reset the text to have no styles applied: Select the text > Font palette - click Clear Formatting. Then click on the style you want to apply.

Converting tables to text

Use columns or tabs to create layout, instead of tables. The reading order will already be correct, and it will look a lot neater.

Select the table > Table tools menu: Layout tab > Convert to text (paragraph marks).

See Tables and lists for instructions for creating columns and column breaks (Page Layout tab > Breaks > Column Break).

Accessibility checker

The Word accessibility checker shows where accessibility can be improved and explains how to do it.

Save as .docx if not already in that format. File > Info > Check for issues box > Check for accessibility.