
UK LOCAL
AUTHORITIES

2016

WEBSITE
CLARITY

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**The VisibleThread Website Index, Government Agencies United Kingdom Local Authorities 2016 –
Q3 Update**

Executive Summary

In 2014, the UK government’s [Digital Service](#), part of the Cabinet Group’s Efficiency and Reform Service issued its [content design: planning, writing and managing content guidelines](#). These guidelines mandate UK Government Departments to communicate online in a clear, concise and well-organized way.

In April 2016, VisibleThread conducted a [study of 12 UK Local Government Authorities](#) for content clarity and accessibility.

Responding to feedback from our earlier study, for this new study we have broadened the cohort to include **194 randomly sampled UK Local Authority websites**. This increased sample size makes the findings more statistically significant.

Why is this new study important? In the [Writing for GOV.UK](#) guide, there are specific guidelines to help writers. It goes further than mere recommendations and states:

“Plain English is mandatory for all of GOV.UK. One of the parts most people pick up on is the plain English (or words to avoid) list. This isn’t just a list of words to avoid. Plain English is the whole ethos of GOV.UK: it’s a way of writing.”

Clear writing helps government departments accomplish two goals:

- **Improve engagement and compliance:** essentially, when more people understand what you want them to do they are more likely to do it,
- **Reduce costs:** When people know what the government asks of them, there's a better chance they'll comply. Improved compliance **reduces the need** for costly extra mailings, follow-up calls and even litigation.

So this study gives an objective scoring of how a large swathe of UK Local Authority websites are doing. For this report we analysed the web pages of **191** of the 418 UK Local Authorities including County Councils, City Councils and Metropolitan District Councils. The findings are based on clarity of written content. We measured up to 100 pages on each website, across the following four dimensions:

- [Readability](#) – How readable is the content?

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- [Passive Language](#) – Active Language communicates clearly. What proportion of sentences is passive?
- [Long Sentences](#) – What proportion of all sentences are too long?
- Word Complexity Density – How many complex, hard-to-understand words does the content contain?

The Top 5 UK Local Authorities were:

1. [South Tyneside Council](#)
2. [Eastbourne Borough Council](#)
3. [London Borough of Hackney](#)
4. [Durham County Council](#)
5. [Huntingdonshire District Council](#)

VisibleThread™ Web Index		UK Local Government – Q2, 2016			Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex	
		Num Pages	Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	
1	South Tyneside Council	100	22.5	66	5	4%	5	7%	6	2.72	74			
2	Eastbourne Borough Council	100	23.75	80	30	7%	36	13%	30	1.32	17			
3	London Borough of Hackney	100	29.25	59	36	8%	34	15%	48	0.77	9			
4	Durham County Council	100	31.75	62	20	11%	78	12%	28	0.00	1			
5	Huntingdonshire District Council	100	33.25	68	13	7%	21	10%	10	3.16	89			

The bottom 5 Local Authorities were:

187. [Sevenoaks District Council](#)
188. [Worcester City Council](#)
189. [Chiltern District Council](#)
190. [Council of the Isles of Scilly](#)
191. [Malvern Hills District Council](#)

VisibleThread™ Web Index		UK Local Government – Q2, 2016			Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex	
		Num Pages	Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	
187	Sevenoaks District Council	100	155	0	190	13%	135	25%	171	4.50	124			
188	Worcester City Council	100	156	51	159	16%	172	26%	178	4.05	115			
189	Chiltern District Council	100	156.5	46	189	17%	181	27%	184	2.72	72			
190	Council of the Isles of Scilly	100	163.75	49	178	13%	114	25%	175	16.88	188			
191	Malvern Hills District Council	100	184.75	49	178	20%	191	31%	190	8.31	180			

Key Findings

Clear Language:

The following guideline definitions will help you understand the information we present in the Key Findings section:

- Readability – the target is a readability score of 60 or higher, approximately a UK year 9 equivalent reading level.
- Passive language – the target is 4% or less.
- Long Sentences – the target is 5% or less across all content.
- Word Complexity Density – How many complex, hard-to-understand words does the content contain?

You can find detailed definitions of ranking criteria in the Methodology section.

High Fliers and Bottom Dwellers - United Kingdom

South Tyneside Council topped the 2016 UK Local Government rankings in this extended study. It scored very well for Readability. It also ranked in the top 10 in three out of the four scoring categories. However, the Department can improve its overall clear writing score still further by reducing its use of complex language.

Eastbourne Borough Council also scored highly. It was let down somewhat by its use of long sentences which can be easily fixed. However, it boosted its overall clarity by achieving target scores for using simple sentences.

Unfortunately, the Malvern Hills District Council website fell well below the target scores across all categories. Amazingly, 31% of all sentences contained more than 25 words. It was also in the bottom three for the use of passive voice and sentence complexity. These three factors combined affected its overall clear writing score.

Similarly, the Council of the Isles of Scilly fared poorly in its use of long sentences. While its use of complex sentences was marginally better, its use of active voice ensured that it did not hit the very bottom.

The clear writing index shows a wide distribution of overall scores ranging from 22.5 (good) to 184.75 (poor). This indicates a lack of consistency in the adoption and implementation of the Writing for GOV.UK guidelines produced by the UK Government.

Only 35 out of the 191 UK Local Government sites achieved a target readability index of 60 or higher. However, the news is not all bad since 141 achieved a score of between 50 and 59. This implies that by simply addressing one of the four areas analysed, the majority of UK Local Authorities can achieve the target clear writing scores.

Leaders and losers by category

Readability: Only 35 out of the 191 Local Authorities (18%) achieved a target readability index score of 60 or higher. [Fylde Borough Council](#) scored an incredible 90 and [Northamptonshire County Council](#) scored an excellent 74.

In writing for GOV.UK it states *“Good online content is easy to read and understand.... A website only works if people can find what they need quickly, complete their task and leave without having to think about it too much.”*

Passive language: Only seven of the UK Local Authorities (3.6%) met the target Passive Language score of 4%. The pages analysed on the [Erewash Borough Council](#) website were all written in the active voice. The [City of Cardiff](#) also performed well with a score of 2%. The [Malvern Hills Council](#) and Northamptonshire County Council came joint last with 20% of the content analysed using the passive voice.

These figures display significant room for improvement especially since the Writing for GOV.UK states *“Use the active rather than passive voice. This will help us write concise, clear content.”*

Long sentences: Erewash Borough Council came out joint top in this category, alongside Fylde Borough Council with a score of 0%. The remaining departments and agencies ranged between 5% and 32%. The Local Authority with the highest percentage of long sentences was Daventry District Council. Nearly one third of its website content comprised sentences of more than 25 words.

In Writing for UK.GOV it states *“You should not use long sentences. Check any sentences with more than 25 words to see if you can split them to make them clearer.”*

Complex Language:

[Durham County Council](#), [Hartlepool Borough Council](#) and [Magherafelt District Council](#) came joint first in the complex language category with websites using simple sentences throughout. [Cornwall Council](#), although just outside the top 30 overall, also shows strong use of simple sentences on its website. [Craven District Council](#) was the tail ender in this category by a clear margin demonstrating the need for significant improvement.

In writing for UK.GOV it states *“The main purpose of GOV.UK is to provide information - there’s no excuse for putting unnecessarily complicated writing in the way of people’s understanding.”*

Room for Improvement: The worst performing Local Authorities were Sevenoaks District Council, Worcester City Council, Chiltern District Council, Council of the Isles of Scilly and Malvern Hills District Council.

Factors making these the worst performers were: high proportion of long sentences (between 25% and 31%), high levels of passive language (13% to 20%) and high degrees of complex language (density between 2.72 and 16.68).

Editors should shorten sentences like this:

“We work with the local business community and residents to bring forward viable propositions that will improve the economic output of the Islands by reducing barriers to employment and the workplace, by raising the value of existing products, by developing opportunities to diversify the business base and by delivering skilled and well paid employment opportunities.”

Note: We found this sentence on the Council for the Isles of Scilly website

1 sentence 55 words => 2 sentence, total word count 30.

“We are working with local businesses and residents to improve our economy. We help to develop businesses that produce a wide range of products and services, which will boost employment.”

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- **Takeaways:**

1. **Wide variability between best and worst performers**

There is very wide variability between the best and lowest scoring websites. This applies across all metrics.

For example, readability ranges from 95 (out of 100) for 1st place Fylde Borough Council in contrast with a 46 (out of 100) for [Chiltern District Council](#). This implies that someone reading the Chiltern District Council website would need a considerably higher level of comprehension; while a person in their second year of primary school are able to make sense of the Fylde Borough Council website.

2. **Government Agencies can dramatically improve clarity by focusing on a few key areas**

Many agencies scored well in certain areas and poorly by one or two areas.

For instance, [Preston City Council](#) ranks 62nd overall. However, it ranks a much higher 24th on readability but very poorly (163rd) in the use complex sentences. Rapid improvement to Local Authority websites is possible by spending a little attention on the relevant key metrics.

3. **Sites catering to non-native English speakers have room for improvement**

The United Kingdom is a multi-cultural society with nearly 1 in 5 primary school pupils speaking English as a second language. Our results indicate that, while the majority of websites analysed perform adequately, there remains considerable work to do to bring all Local Authority websites up-to-scratch.

4. **Improving online clarity can reduce costs**

Local Authority websites, which have improved the clarity of their online content, can save significant sums of money. When citizens can find information, understand content and complete tasks online, Local Authorities can reduce support costs and free up staff time to work on other important tasks.

Detailed Results Table

We show the full detailed table below.

Colour-coding helps us to understand sites where one or two specific scores may be dragging down the overall ranking. Flagging specific areas (for instance, passive language) pinpoints areas for improvement.

KEY: **Green** = On or near target, **Amber** = Some work needed, **Red** = Well below target level

VisibleThread™ Web Index			UK Local Government – Q2, 2016				Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
Rank	Authority	URL	Num Pages	Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank			
1	South Tyneside Council	http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk	100	22.5	66	5	4%	5	7%	6	2.72	74	16809				
2	Eastbourne Borough Council	http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/	100	23.75	60	30	7%	16	13%	32	1.32	17	38199				
3	London Borough of Hackney	http://www.hackney.gov.uk/	100	29.25	59	36	8%	24	15%	48	0.77	9	45994				
4	Durham County Council	http://www.durham.gov.uk/	100	31.75	62	20	11%	78	12%	28	0.00	1	25469				
5	Huntingdonshire District Council	http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk	100	33.25	63	13	7%	21	10%	10	3.16	89	34055				
5	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/	100	33.25	63	13	4%	7	5%	3	3.92	110	21417				
7	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/	101	35	58	57	7%	19	12%	31	1.62	33	29955				
8	Aylesbury Vale District Council	http://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/	100	36.75	65	8	3%	4	11%	13	4.47	122	13302				
9	Fylde Borough Council	http://www.fylde.gov.uk/	100	37.25	95	1	0%	2	0%	2	5.65	144	11176				
10	Scarborough Borough Council	http://www.scarborough.gov.uk/	100	37.5	63	13	9%	42	11%	15	2.85	80	24417				
11	Oxfordshire County Council	http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/	100	39.5	65	8	11%	92	13%	34	1.45	24	33477				
12	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	http://www.barnsley.gov.uk/	100	40	66	5	7%	17	17%	80	2.29	58	23756				
13	London Borough of Brent	https://www.brent.gov.uk/	100	42.75	63	13	12%	99	15%	52	0.65	7	44358				

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Rank	Local Authority	URL	Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
14	Liverpool City Council	http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/	100	43	66	5	4%	6	8%	8	5.92	153	16772	
14	Reading Borough Council	http://beta.reading.gov.uk/	100	43	63	13	6%	13	12%	27	4.32	119	34072	
16	Hull City Council	http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/	100	43.75	60	30	9%	41	17%	76	1.55	28	41829	
17	Corby Borough Council	http://www.corby.gov.uk/	100	46	63	13	7%	17	10%	9	5.66	145	25246	
18	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	http://www.stoke.gov.uk/	100	46.75	57	78	6%	15	11%	16	2.77	78	34654	
19	Kirklees Council	http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/	100	47	59	36	9%	36	18%	86	1.57	30	32657	
20	Derbyshire County Council	http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/	100	48.25	61	24	8%	23	14%	43	3.61	103	28507	
21	Braintree District Council	http://www.braintree.gov.uk/	100	49.5	62	20	6%	12	6%	4	6.37	162	10563	
22	Luton Borough Council	http://www.luton.gov.uk/	100	49.75	59	36	8%	25	12%	29	3.86	109	20982	
23	Bournemouth Borough Council	http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/	100	52.25	59	36	8%	27	14%	40	3.76	106	20224	
24	East Riding of Yorkshire Council	http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/	100	53	59	36	11%	73	17%	72	1.58	31	49020	
25	Oadby and Wigston District Council	http://oadby-wigston.gov.uk/Home/Home.aspx	100	54.75	58	57	11%	86	16%	62	1.28	14	36652	
26	Fenland District Council	http://www.fenland.gov.uk/	100	55	61	24	8%	29	13%	35	4.94	132	22445	
27	Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	http://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/	100	58	60	30	6%	10	8%	7	13.09	185	11125	
28	Manchester City Council	http://www.manchester.gov.uk/	100	58.5	59	36	5%	8	16%	61	4.87	129	21797	
28	Portsmouth City Council	http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/	100	58.5	55	108	8%	31	17%	77	1.36	18	27302	
30	Hampshire County Council	http://www.hants.gov.uk/	100	58.75	55	108	10%	60	14%	38	1.56	29	25506	
31	Forest Heath District Council	http://www.forest-heath.gov.uk/	100	59.5	59	36	10%	67	19%	99	1.67	36	18108	
32	Cornwall Council	http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/	100	59.75	54	118	9%	35	17%	82	0.52	4	50582	
33	Leicester City Council	http://www.leicester.gov.uk/	100	60.5	56	92	6%	14	10%	11	4.55	125	18740	
34	Medway Council	http://www.medway.gov.uk/	100	61	58	57	9%	40	14%	39	3.79	108	23874	
35	Isle of Wight Council	http://www.iwight.com	100	61.5	62	20	11%	71	17%	74	2.85	81	22363	
36	Cambridge City Council	https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/	100	61.75	58	57	6%	11	12%	30	5.78	149	7929	
37	South Kesteven District Council	http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/	100	62.25	67	4	16%	168	12%	25	2.15	52	24295	

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Rank	Local Authority	URL	Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
37	Redditch Borough Council	http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/	100	62.25	59	36	11%	79	19%	97	1.70	37	16575	
39	East Sussex County Council	http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/	100	62.5	60	30	8%	30	16%	55	5.01	135	13464	
40	City of Cardiff Council	http://www.cardiff.gov.uk	101	62.75	55	108	2%	3	15%	54	3.09	86	12314	
41	London Borough of Enfield	http://www.enfield.gov.uk/	100	64	62	20	10%	49	12%	21	6.73	166	31984	
42	Exeter City Council	http://exeter.gov.uk/	100	64.5	63	13	10%	66	11%	18	6.31	161	24646	
43	Lincolnshire County Council	http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/	100	65	58	57	7%	22	10%	12	7.04	169	24064	
44	Rugby Borough Council	http://www.rugby.gov.uk/	100	65.5	69	3	8%	28	15%	49	9.37	182	7086	
44	Dorset County Council	http://www.dorsetforyou.com/	100	65.5	61	24	13%	132	16%	67	1.75	39	27488	
46	Erewash Borough Council	http://www.erewash.gov.uk/	100	65.75	57	78	0%	1	0%	1	11.33	183	6300	
47	Lancaster City Council	http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/	100	67.5	58	57	10%	46	15%	50	4.20	117	33807	
48	Monmouthshire County Council	http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk	100	68.5	54	118	11%	87	14%	37	1.61	32	32810	
49	Leeds City Council	http://www.leeds.gov.uk/	100	69	65	8	13%	134	13%	33	3.47	101	26020	
50	Cambridgeshire County Council	http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk	100	69.25	58	57	13%	109	17%	73	1.73	38	23034	
50	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/	100	69.25	57	78	9%	44	19%	105	2.09	50	29072	
52	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	http://www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/	100	69.75	59	36	10%	64	11%	14	6.61	165	12880	
52	North Somerset Council	http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/	100	69.75	55	108	5%	9	7%	5	6.09	157	12685	
54	Derby City Council	http://www.derby.gov.uk/	100	70.25	59	36	10%	68	16%	56	4.42	121	26589	
55	Milton Keynes Council	http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/	100	71.25	59	36	9%	34	23%	159	2.25	56	18628	
56	Dacorum Borough Council	http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/	100	71.75	58	57	12%	106	19%	103	1.41	21	41365	
57	Telford & Wrekin Council	http://www.telford.gov.uk	100	72.5	64	12	9%	45	15%	46	15.68	187	21127	
57	Essex County Council	http://www.essex.gov.uk/Pages/Default.aspx	100	72.5	60	30	9%	37	14%	42	9.23	181	16560	
59	Fareham Borough Council	http://www.fareham.gov.uk/	101	73	59	36	11%	79	20%	122	2.17	55	26940	
60	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	http://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/	100	73.5	56	92	8%	26	11%	17	6.26	159	15199	

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Rank	Local Authority	URL	Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
61	Birmingham City Council	http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/	100	74	59	36	13%	122	20%	130	0.71	8	45024	
62	Preston City Council	http://www.preston.gov.uk/	100	74.5	61	24	11%	91	12%	20	6.47	163	31782	
62	Peterborough City Council	http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/	100	74.5	58	57	9%	39	19%	110	3.25	92	37164	
64	Derbyshire Dales District Council	http://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk	100	75.25	58	57	13%	118	16%	59	2.62	67	33459	
65	East Staffordshire Borough Council	http://www.eaststaffsbcc.gov.uk/	100	75.75	59	36	10%	46	17%	69	5.90	152	14414	
66	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/	100	76.25	61	24	17%	181	16%	57	1.88	43	30708	
67	West Sussex County Council	http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/	100	77	58	57	11%	93	16%	64	3.27	94	29512	
68	North Dorset District Council	http://www.dorsetforyou.com/	100	77.25	60	30	13%	118	16%	63	3.41	98	25993	
69	Lichfield District Council	https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/	100	77.5	57	78	12%	101	19%	109	1.45	22	33249	
70	Weymouth and Portland Borough Council	http://www.dorsetforyou.com/	100	78.75	59	36	15%	156	17%	70	2.16	53	27904	
70	Rutland County Council	http://www.rutland.gov.uk/	100	78.75	58	57	10%	53	19%	100	3.69	105	31573	
70	Perth and Kinross Council	http://www.pkc.gov.uk	100	78.75	56	92	9%	33	17%	78	3.94	112	23545	
73	Newark and Sherwood District Council	http://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/	100	79.5	58	57	10%	49	19%	115	3.37	97	33735	
74	Oxford City Council	https://www.oxford.gov.uk/	100	80.5	58	57	8%	32	17%	79	6.02	154	15654	
74	London Borough of Camden	http://www.camden.gov.uk/	100	80.5	56	92	10%	49	16%	68	4.01	113	24677	
76	Gedling Borough Council	http://www.gedling.gov.uk/	100	80.75	57	78	11%	83	22%	149	1.19	13	30677	
77	South Holland District Council	http://www.sholland.gov.uk/	100	81.25	58	57	10%	58	16%	64	5.68	146	23572	
77	Maldon District Council	http://www.maldon.gov.uk/	100	81.25	57	78	16%	178	14%	43	1.52	26	18212	
79	Hartlepool Borough Council	http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk	100	82.25	57	78	15%	154	19%	96	0.00	1	8752	
80	Glasgow City Council	http://www.glasgow.gov.uk	100	83.25	59	36	15%	161	18%	85	2.15	51	17888	
81	Nottingham City Council	http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/	100	83.5	54	118	13%	110	18%	86	1.40	20	29580	
82	Shropshire Council	http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/	100	83.75	54	118	11%	70	21%	136	0.96	11	16181	
83	Harborough District Council	http://www.harborough.gov.uk/	100	85.75	59	36	11%	82	14%	41	11.80	184	16379	
84	Castle Point Borough Council	http://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/	100	86.25	56	92	11%	88	19%	108	2.27	57	32904	

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Rank	Local Authority	URL	Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
85	Pendle Borough Council	http://www.pendle.gov.uk/	100	86.75	58	57	10%	62	15%	51	7.87	177	12025	
86	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	http://www.tmbc.gov.uk	100	88	59	36	17%	188	12%	26	3.49	102	24960	
86	Newcastle City Council	http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/	100	88	58	57	13%	121	24%	162	0.99	12	54206	
88	Arun District Council	http://www.arun.gov.uk/	100	89	57	78	11%	72	21%	135	2.69	71	51256	
89	Maidstone Borough Council	http://www.maidstone.gov.uk	100	89.25	65	8	13%	124	13%	36	18.02	189	26315	
90	Bracknell Forest Council	http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/	100	90	58	57	10%	52	20%	128	4.47	123	15966	
91	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	http://www.sefton.gov.uk/	100	90.25	55	108	11%	84	19%	106	2.46	63	22978	
92	Leicestershire County Council	http://www.leics.gov.uk/	100	90.5	55	108	16%	171	12%	22	2.39	61	23496	
93	Kent County Council	http://www.kent.gov.uk/	100	90.75	59	36	11%	89	19%	104	5.01	134	18350	
94	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/	100	91	54	118	13%	116	12%	23	3.78	107	23058	
94	Kettering Borough Council	http://www.kettering.gov.uk/	100	91	50	169	7%	20	12%	24	5.87	151	19375	
96	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/	101	92.75	52	149	10%	62	19%	111	2.05	49	39274	
97	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	http://www.southend.gov.uk/	100	93.25	61	24	14%	151	22%	151	2.01	47	25779	
98	Copeland Borough Council	http://www.copeland.gov.uk	100	93.5	54	118	9%	43	21%	134	2.81	79	31461	
99	Buckinghamshire County Council	http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/	100	94.75	54	118	10%	48	16%	58	6.07	155	18325	
100	East Lindsey District Council	http://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/	100	96.5	59	36	13%	130	16%	60	6.28	160	24161	
100	Stafford Borough Council	http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/	100	96.5	58	57	13%	132	19%	112	3.06	85	25914	
102	St Albans City and District Council	http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/	100	97	52	149	10%	55	15%	45	5.25	139	47977	
103	Canterbury City Council	https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/	100	97.25	56	92	11%	81	18%	90	4.66	126	16174	
104	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/	100	98.25	57	78	10%	56	18%	89	7.05	170	17863	
105	Norfolk County Council	http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/	100	100	57	78	10%	65	20%	120	5.09	137	22319	
106	St Helens Council	http://www.sthelens.gov.uk	100	102	56	92	12%	98	20%	123	3.30	95	20363	
107	Orkney Islands Council	http://www.orkney.gov.uk/	100	103	50	169	10%	61	19%	100	2.86	82	35302	
108	Mid Sussex District Council	http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/	100	103.25	55	108	12%	105	22%	146	2.17	54	25169	

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Rank	Local Authority	URL	Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
109	Great Yarmouth Borough Council	http://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk	100	103.75	58	57	10%	57	20%	125	7.74	176	24631	
110	Sheffield City Council	http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/	101	104.25	56	92	10%	59	18%	94	7.09	172	19991	
111	South Cambridgeshire District Council	http://www.scams.gov.uk/	100	104.5	52	149	13%	129	19%	113	1.53	27	37439	
112	Ryedale District Council	http://www.ryedale.gov.uk	102	104.75	49	178	14%	139	18%	92	0.92	10	84573	
113	Stevenage Borough Council	http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/	100	105.5	56	92	11%	75	18%	88	6.90	167	22342	
114	Gosport Borough Council	http://www.gosport.gov.uk/	100	106	51	159	12%	97	22%	143	1.47	25	26951	
115	Melton Borough Council	http://www.melton.gov.uk/	100	106.25	57	78	12%	100	18%	83	6.52	164	10036	
115	Belfast City Council	http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk	100	106.25	53	138	9%	38	19%	107	5.52	142	29956	
117	Harlow Council	http://www.harlow.gov.uk/	100	107.25	53	138	12%	95	26%	177	1.37	19	37534	
118	Salford City Council	http://www.salford.gov.uk	100	109	58	57	13%	131	20%	121	4.70	127	20179	
118	Mendip District Council	http://www.mendip.gov.uk/	100	109	54	118	12%	104	22%	144	2.64	70	27603	
120	Cheltenham Borough Council	http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/	100	109.25	51	159	11%	75	15%	53	5.86	150	15882	
121	Chelmsford City Council	http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/	100	110	59	36	13%	128	19%	98	8.10	178	19944	
122	Slough Borough Council	http://www.slough.gov.uk/	100	110.25	56	92	15%	153	22%	152	1.92	44	27796	
123	Chichester District Council	http://www.chichester.gov.uk/	100	110.5	57	78	12%	108	19%	100	6.08	156	31149	
123	Eastleigh Borough Council	http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/	100	110.5	52	149	13%	117	20%	117	2.30	59	28068	
125	New Forest District Council	http://www.newforest.gov.uk/	100	111.25	54	118	14%	150	24%	161	1.31	16	26038	
126	North Kesteven District Council	http://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/	100	111.5	54	118	16%	175	20%	118	1.64	35	21113	
127	North Norfolk District Council	http://www.northnorfolk.org/	100	112	56	92	13%	125	24%	163	2.63	68	42728	
128	Hyndburn Borough Council	http://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk	100	112.25	51	159	11%	90	19%	116	2.93	84	14548	
129	City of London	http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/	100	112.5	49	178	11%	77	25%	172	1.45	23	41181	
130	Hertfordshire County Council	http://www.hertsdirect.org/	100	113.75	52	149	10%	54	22%	153	3.43	99	17426	
131	Cherwell District Council	http://www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk/	100	114	56	92	15%	159	23%	157	2.04	48	27890	
132	Knowsley Council	http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/	100	114.5	54	118	13%	112	22%	141	3.13	87	43881	

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Rank	Local Authority	URL	Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
132	Lancashire County Council	http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/	100	114.5	54	118	11%	74	22%	148	4.23	118	28681	
134	West Devon Borough Council	http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/	100	115.75	57	78	13%	120	20%	127	5.21	138	14940	
135	Warwickshire County Council	http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/	100	116	54	118	16%	164	18%	91	3.23	91	32143	
136	Hertsmere Borough Council	http://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/	100	116.5	52	149	15%	155	23%	156	0.57	6	35025	
137	Lewes District Council	http://www.lewes.gov.uk/	100	117	55	108	16%	173	22%	147	1.79	40	32605	
138	Craven District Council	http://www.cravencd.gov.uk/	100	117.75	56	92	11%	69	20%	119	46.45	191	22457	
139	Aberdeenshire Council	http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/	100	120	50	169	12%	96	15%	47	6.99	168	17494	
140	Bath and North East Somerset Council	http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/	100	121.25	53	138	14%	137	18%	94	4.13	116	28194	
141	Northamptonshire County Council	http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/	100	122.25	74	2	20%	190	20%	126	7.07	171	6800	
142	Tamworth Borough Council	http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/	101	122.5	55	108	13%	126	16%	66	28.01	190	26718	
142	Flintshire County Council	http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/	100	122.5	54	118	14%	136	24%	167	2.63	69	39294	
144	Bolsover District Council	http://www.bolsover.gov.uk/	101	124	53	138	17%	187	24%	166	0.56	5	88531	
145	Central Bedfordshire Council	http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/	100	124.25	53	138	12%	102	25%	174	2.92	83	20051	
146	Bedford Borough Council	http://www.bedford.gov.uk/	100	124.5	51	159	12%	107	18%	84	5.71	148	46902	
147	Halton Borough Council	http://www.halton.gov.uk/	100	125	51	159	13%	123	17%	75	5.58	143	18074	
148	Guildford Borough Council	http://www.guildford.gov.uk/	100	125.5	53	138	14%	141	20%	133	3.20	90	28938	
149	London Borough of Croydon	http://www.croydon.gov.uk/	100	126	50	169	17%	180	12%	19	5.03	136	18495	
150	Broxtowe Borough Council	http://www.broxtowe.gov.uk/	100	126.25	56	92	14%	140	20%	132	5.51	141	14635	
151	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	http://www.stockton.gov.uk/	100	127	54	118	16%	169	23%	155	2.60	66	31555	
152	South Lakeland District Council	http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/	100	127.25	53	138	16%	176	17%	81	4.03	114	22897	
153	Wellingborough Borough Council	http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/	100	127.5	55	108	16%	167	20%	124	3.93	111	16952	
154	Dover District Council	http://www.dover.gov.uk/	100	128.25	57	78	16%	166	20%	129	5.27	140	22171	
155	Selby District Council	http://www.selby.gov.uk/	100	130	54	118	13%	111	23%	158	4.98	133	22113	
156	Eden District Council	http://www.eden.gov.uk/	100	130.5	51	159	14%	138	21%	137	3.15	88	31390	

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Rank	Local Authority	URL	Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
157	Magherafelt District Council	http://www.magherafelt.gov.uk	100	131.25	51	159	17%	186	26%	179	0.00	1	22352	
157	Rushcliffe Borough Council	http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/	100	131.25	51	159	15%	160	24%	165	1.79	41	41681	
159	Northampton Borough Council	http://www.northampton.gov.uk/	100	131.75	54	118	13%	113	21%	138	6.15	158	19917	
160	Gloucestershire County Council	http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/	101	132.25	56	92	12%	94	24%	164	8.27	179	15570	
160	North West Leicestershire District Council	http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/	100	132.25	53	138	12%	103	19%	113	7.54	175	25355	
162	Hart District Council	http://www.hart.gov.uk	100	132.75	52	149	14%	149	25%	168	2.52	65	23709	
163	East Dunbartonshire Council	http://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk	100	133	52	149	14%	145	25%	176	2.46	62	22993	
164	Boston Borough Council	http://www.boston.gov.uk/	100	133.5	52	149	17%	181	31%	189	1.28	15	23627	
165	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	http://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/	100	134	54	118	14%	148	21%	140	4.90	130	12965	
165	Cotswold District Council	http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/	100	134	50	169	14%	146	18%	93	4.82	128	31828	
167	Carlisle City Council	http://www.carlisle.gov.uk	100	134.75	56	92	14%	144	20%	130	7.37	173	20670	
167	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council	http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/	100	134.75	50	169	16%	165	22%	145	2.33	60	23437	
169	London Borough of Hounslow	http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/	100	135.25	53	138	15%	157	26%	182	2.47	64	33668	
170	Borough of Barrow-in-Furness	http://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/	100	139.25	48	185	13%	127	17%	71	7.38	174	30863	
171	Somerset County Council	http://www.somerset.gov.uk/	100	139.5	48	185	14%	147	26%	180	1.95	46	41283	
172	Mid Suffolk District Council	http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/	100	140	50	169	15%	158	23%	160	2.72	73	32646	
173	Devon County Council	http://www.devon.gov.uk/	100	141	49	178	11%	85	25%	170	4.92	131	23556	
174	East Hertfordshire District Council	http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/	100	141.75	53	138	17%	179	22%	154	3.35	96	30386	
175	South Bucks District Council	http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/	100	142.25	54	118	13%	115	22%	150	14.93	186	12104	
176	Basildon Borough Council	http://www.basildon.gov.uk/	100	143.25	53	138	15%	162	25%	173	3.43	100	23590	
177	High Peak Borough Council	http://www.highpeak.gov.uk/	100	143.75	50	169	15%	163	21%	139	3.63	104	13803	
178	Tewkesbury Borough Council	http://tewkesbury.gov.uk/	101	145	52	149	14%	142	25%	169	4.32	120	21349	
178	East Cambridgeshire District Council	http://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/	100	145	49	178	16%	174	28%	186	1.83	42	24696	
180	Cumbria County Council	http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/	100	145.75	54	118	16%	177	22%	141	5.70	147	22017	

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			Num Pages	Clear Writing		Readability		Passive		Long		Complex		Num Words
				Index	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank		
181	Gloucester City Council	http://www.gloucester.gov.uk/	100	146	50	169	15%	152	29%	188	2.74	75	24759	
182	Daventry District Council	http://www.daventrydc.gov.uk	100	147	49	178	17%	185	32%	191	1.63	34	39983	
183	Bassetlaw District Council	http://www.bassetlaw.gov.uk/	100	150	48	185	19%	189	26%	181	1.95	45	31110	
184	Cheshire East Council	http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/	100	151.75	51	159	17%	184	29%	187	2.76	77	33709	
185	Dartford Borough Council	http://www.dartford.gov.uk/	100	152.75	0	190	14%	143	28%	185	3.27	93	34165	
186	Derry City Council	http://www.derrycity.gov.uk	100	153.5	48	185	16%	170	27%	183	2.75	76	35616	
187	Sevenoaks District Council	http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/	100	155	0	190	13%	135	25%	171	4.50	124	14183	
188	Worcester City Council	http://www.worcester.gov.uk	100	156	51	159	16%	172	26%	178	4.05	115	32448	
189	Chiltern District Council	http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/	100	156.5	46	189	17%	181	27%	184	2.72	72	29746	
190	Council of the Isles of Scilly	http://www.scilly.gov.uk	100	163.75	49	178	13%	114	25%	175	16.88	188	22967	
191	Malvern Hills District Council	http://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/	100	184.75	49	178	20%	191	31%	190	8.31	180	29278	

Methodology – what are the metrics?

- We scanned between up to 100 pages of content as a result of using automated crawling techniques.
- We crawled starting from the publically available URL.
- Certain pages within the sample contain non-textual content (eg: videos). We omitted these pages from our scan.
- If scan had fewer than 100 pages, we included the page count and word count for each agency.

We calculated the index based on 4 metrics. Each metric contributes equally to the final score. The metrics are:

Metric	Formula
<p>1. Readability</p> <p>Readability ranges from 1 to 100. 100 is the top mark. If communicating with citizens, aim for at least 60.</p> <p>This is based on the Flesch Reading Ease index.</p>	$(206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{Average Sentence Length}) - (84.6 \times \text{Average Syllables per Word}))$
<p>2. Passive Language</p> <p>The % rating is the proportion of sentences with a passive construction. Passive language is where the subject is acted upon by the verb. For example:</p> <p>"Quality is monitored" vs. "We monitor quality"</p> <p>If you use active voice, you will increase clarity & strength. You will also flush out the 'actor', i.e. who did the action?</p>	$(\text{Passive Sentences} / \text{Total Sentences} * 100)$
<p>3. Long Sentences</p> <p>The % rating is the proportion of sentences that are longer than 25 words. Long sentences mask multiple concepts. Splitting up these sentences will result in a clearer message.</p>	$(\text{Long Sentences} / \text{Total Sentences} * 100)$
<p>4. Complex Word Density</p> <p>The density rating is the proportion of complex words relative to the total word count. This scan looks for</p>	$(\text{Complex Words} / \text{Total Words} * 100)$

complex words/phrases based on Federal Guidelines. See 100)
<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/wordsuggestions/simplerwords.cfm> for the list scanned. Replacing complex words with simpler words helps your readers concentrate on your content.

About VisibleThread

VisibleThread provides document content analysis solutions for sales and marketing professionals. We flag poor quality and complex language for documents and websites. This eliminates tedious manual review cycles, saving you time and cost.

Our solutions & reports allow customers to:

- Scan docs and websites in minutes
- Identify risky and complex language with objective metrics
- Benchmark web sites against sector peers
- Flag compliance issues

For corporate teams, government agencies and non-profits, our solutions make review teams 40% more efficient and increase sales and marketing conversions.

For questions or if you want a specific sector index:

- For a specific agency or bureau index, email: sales@visiblethread.com
- For questions on the metrics or methodology, email: support@visiblethread.com