A Guide to Using Images on your Website

NHS Lothian Webteam
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Images can be a great addition to a website, they help to engage your audience by providing visual examples of things you mention on your page, but there are a number of issues that you should consider when sourcing images to illustrate your site. This guide sets out to help you choose when or when not to use images and how to source images cheaply and safely.

1. Do You Really Need That Image?

They may be colourful, they may be eye-catching, but as nice as images may be, not every webpage actually needs images. When you add images to your website's design, you want to make sure they are relevant. The important part is that you don't use images just for the sake of using them. They should add value to your page and provide your audience with a great visual representation to enhance your text.

Compare the two "cards" below. Does the one with the image really add anything extra to the card? Probably not. The user is presented with the same information and the same call-to-action with or without an image. Imagine you were presenting a card with a "niche" topic to display. If you have chosen to use images in your cards, you may well have trouble finding an image that appropriately illustrates your topic, and you may end up having to choose a less than ideal image, and the message could arguably be clearer using text alone, without an image.

The majority of people view webpages from mobile devices these days. The image that you spent a long time deliberating upon may only be displayed 3 inches wide, and glimpsed only for a mere second as the user scrolls down to get to the actual information they are seeking.

A common misconception is that webpages that are text-only are boring to look at and uninteresting to read.

That may be true if you simply paste paragraph after paragraph of text onto your page. Try breaking text up into more "bite-sized" paragraphs interspersed with headers. Text can also be pulled out of the flow and highlighted with careful use of coloured group backgrounds etc. Opposite is an example of a visually interesting layout achieved without the use of images.
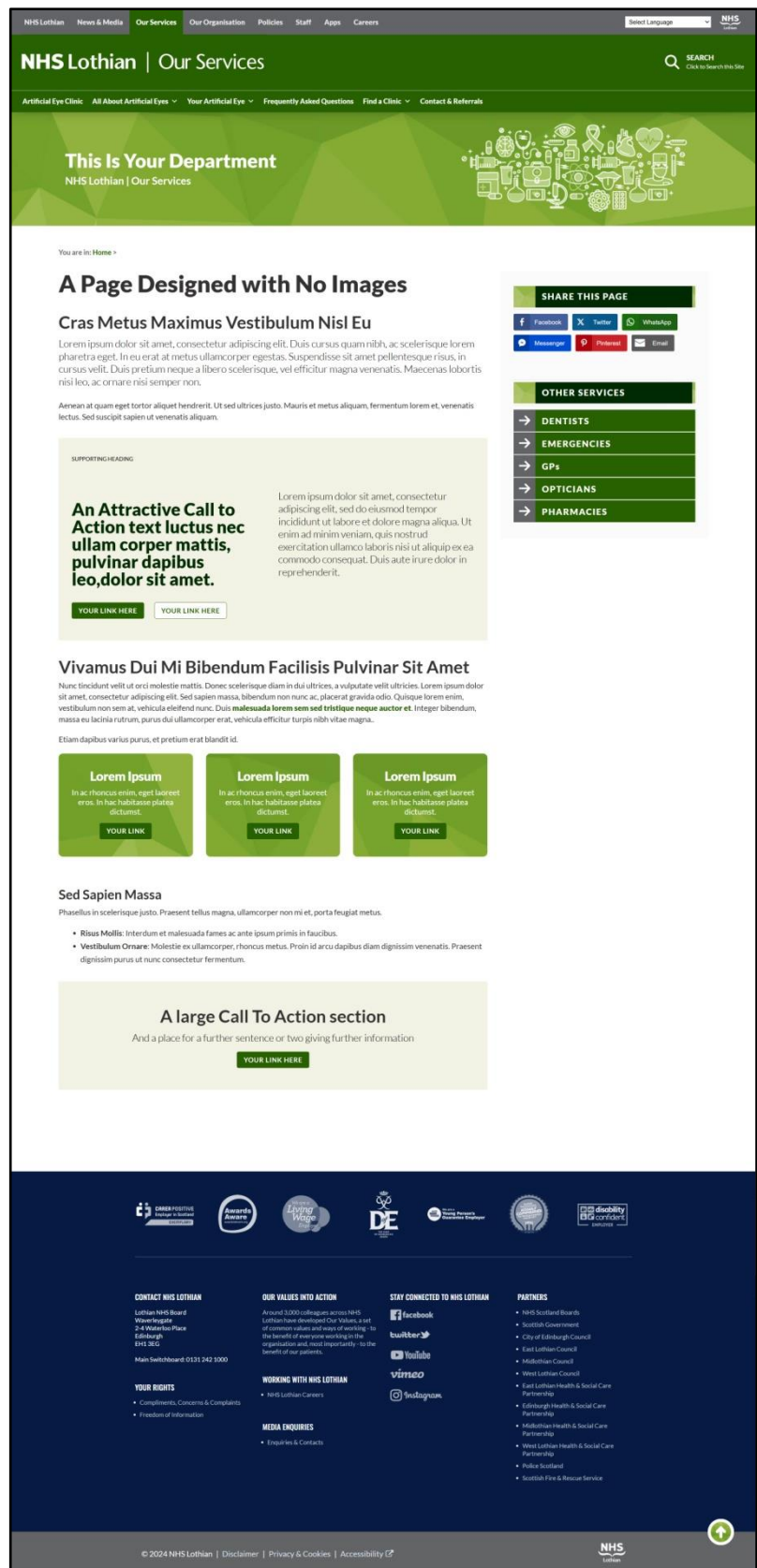
2. Create Your Own Images

When you have a requirement for images, your first thought may be "where can I get them from?" Photo Libraries may seem like the obvious answer, but perhaps you could consider making your own selection of images.

Even just a few years ago creating your own high-quality images was a task really reserved for professional photographers. Now we all have the ability to take multi-megapixel images with the camera on our mobile phone. All it takes from you is a little bit of planning and a little bit of your time. You are the expert in your field, and in the best position to illustrate your pages. Either using yourself or colleagues as subjects you could well build up your own unique library of images.

These two images show an example of a stock image, versus an image self-taken with a mobile phone camera and enhanced with a quick visit to online photo editor Canva https://www.canva.com/
Original images add authenticity to your site. By implementing original photos, you can give people a visual representation of the actual work that goes on in your department. If you are unable to take your own images, perhaps contact Medical Photography to see if they could help. If you are taking your own photographs of individuals (including NHSScotland staff), please fill in the Image/Audio/Case Study Consent Form: at http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/Directory/communications/Documents/CONSENT%20 FORM%20FOR%20MEDIA%20AND%20IMAGES.pdf

3. Stock Image Libraries

If creating your own images is not an option, sourcing images from a stock image library is another choice. A common misconception is that to find high-quality stock images you have to pay high-prices. That's not always true. Shutterstock https://www.shutterstock.com is one of the best and most affordable libraries out there. For one-off projects like creating your own pages, Shutterstock has very affordable plans such as simple image bundles for low one-off prices. Stock image sites vet their images to ensure there's no risk of copyright infringement giving those who use stock photos peace of mind.

4. No Cost Images

When sourcing free images from the web to illustrate your site, there are a number of issues that you should consider in order to avoid potential copyright infringement.

The number-one thing not to do when sourcing images is just "grab them from Google". Just because an image is already online, it does not mean it can be re-used. Even if the image is already on an NHS Lothian website, it still does not necessarily mean you can re-use it – it will depend on the image licence. Don't think "There are billions of web pages out there. No one will ever know" ... Software for tracing usage of unlicensed images is increasingly sophisticated. It can even search within Microsoft documents such as PowerPoint and Word and can also find unlicensed images inside PDF documents. Fines for using unlicensed images can range from tens to hundreds of pounds, and you are unlikely to succeed in asking for the fee to be waived because of accidental infringement.

No Attribution Websites

There are some well regarded sites for downloading images that you can use on your website without charge and without attribution. The webteam are providing the following examples of no attribution image websites as a guide. This list is not exhaustive as websites are subject to change. The webteam accepts no responsibility for changes to licensing agreements on these sites. All content including images placed on your site is YOUR responsibility, NOT the responsibility of the NHS Lothian webteam. It is your responsibility to check before you use any images from this list of sites.
(02 Dec 2024).

Free-to-Use without attribution (as of 02/12/2024)

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NHS Scotland Photo Library https://nhsscotlandphotolibrary.org
Free to use. Attribution is not required.

Positive Mental Health Image Library https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-involved/mental-health-image-library
Free to use. Attribution is not required.

Age-Positive Image Library https://www.agewithoutlimits.org/image-library
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A Note on Creative Commons Copyright Licences

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IMPORTANT: Each individual creator or CC repository has different methods by which you must credit the creator. Some are more stringent than others, i.e. some may ask for a simple creator credit and link, whereas others may stipulate exactly the formatting of the credit (including sometimes providing the actual HTML code required for insertion on your page). You must treat each image separately and consult the site from which you are downloading for instructions.

It is easy to fall foul with using Creative Commons images (unless you are using CC0 images) as it can be very easy to make mistakes and not credit images in the correct format. Even making one mistake in the format can lead to a claim against you. Therefore the Webteam advises against using images classed as Creative Commons and use images where no attribution is required.

5. Adding a Creator's Credit to your Images

If you have an image that you absolutely need to use, and you need to provide a credit for, there are three ways to do this:

Scenario One:

A photographer has allowed you to use an image but requests that you put their name and a link back to their website.

Upload your image to your WordPress Media Library, then full out the two fields:

Then insert the image onto your page using the WordPress block "Image":

This will result in the following displaying on your webpage (note the hyperlinked credit in the bottom left corner)

Scenario Two:

A website allows you to use an image but requests a more involved credit with more than one link in the text.

Upload your image to your WordPress Media Library, then fill out the "Caption" field with the text that you want to display:

Caption	Photo by Ilnur Kalimullin on Unsplash

Then insert the image onto your page using the WordPress block "Image":

MEDIA

Image

Then you can edit the caption inserting your links:

Photo by *Ilnur Kalimullin* on *Unsplash*

TEXT

Unsplash

LINK

https://yourlinkhere

🌐 https://yourlinkhere
Press ENTER to add this link   Link

˅ Advanced

Scenario Three:

A website allows you to use an image but states that their exact credit must be used and provides you with the code to insert into your page.

Upload your image to your WordPress Media Library (no need to fill "Caption", or "Credit" or "Credit URL" fields). Then insert the image onto your page using the WordPress block "Image":

Immediately after this block insert the WordPress block "Custom HTML",

Paste in your supplied code (below left). This will result in the image displaying on your webpage, immediately followed by the HTML code (below right).

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