



Intro to content design

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nomensa

Humanising Technology

Contents

- What is content design?
- Why is it important?
- Activity 1
- The basics
- Activity 2
- Working with content designers
- Resources

Introductions



Hannah Atkinson

- Principal content designer
- Nomensa

Mark Foley

- Content designer

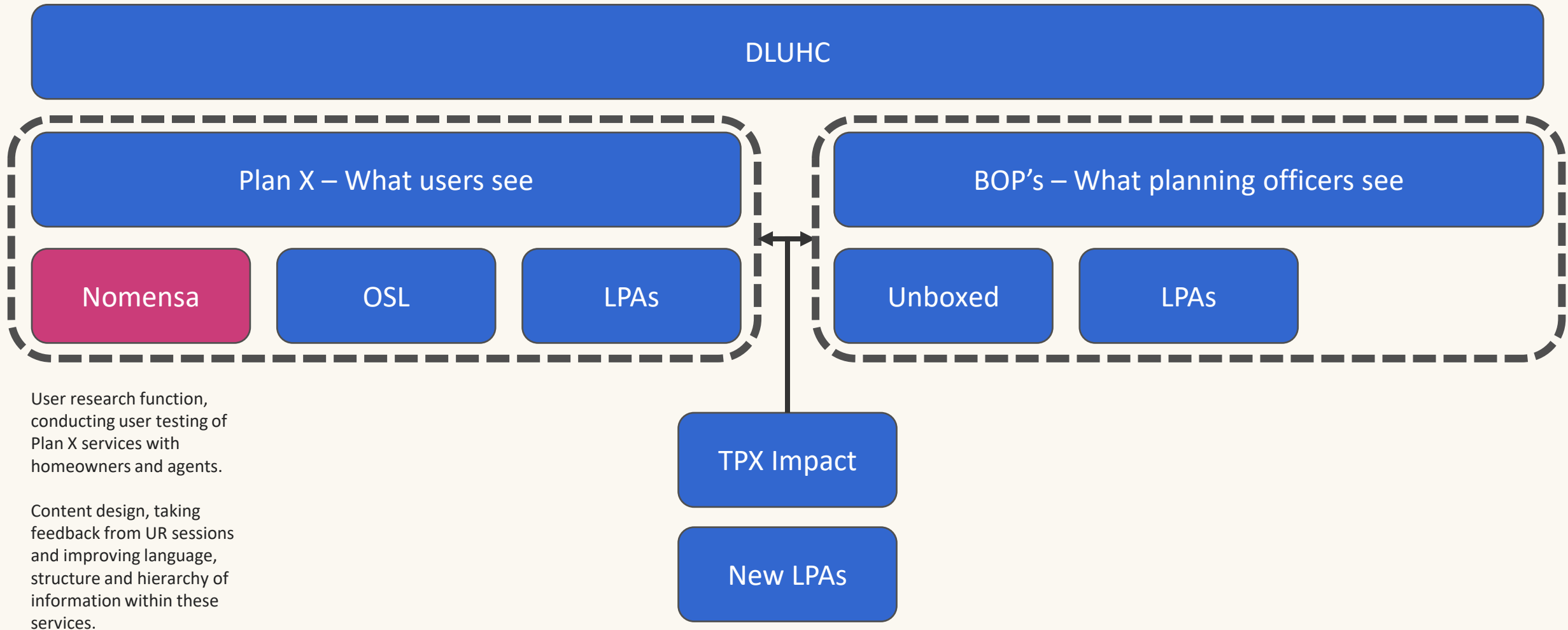


We're an experience design agency specializing in evidence-led design, delivering solutions for clients that make a measurable and sustainable difference.



n@mensa

Who is Nomensa?



What is content design?

Content design is the practice of producing information based on user needs in the most appropriate format.

What do content designers do?



- We're the word people – but content design is more than just words. We focus on the intentional design of language
- Not just making things sounds 'ok' – it's expressing the meaning, usually in as few words as possible
- Strategic design – layout, taxonomy, information architecture
- Design isn't design without content

Content designer
Content strategist
Content manager
UX writer
Copywriter

Why is it important?

User centered design



- We're trying to make what we want to say into something people can read and understand
- User research and testing makes sure we're delivering content that helps solve a problem
- Users can do what they need to do in the quickest time possible

"It's about using data and evidence to give the audience what they need, at the time they need it and in a way they expect." Sarah Richards, Content Design

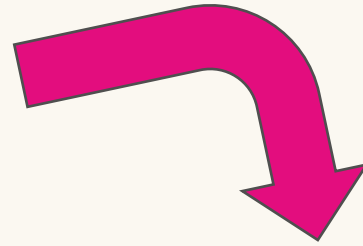
Making life easier for everyone



- Around 9% of people in the UK have English as second language (5.1 million people)
- 40% of accessibility guidelines are about content
- 16.4% of adults in England can be described as having 'very poor' literacy skills (7.1 million people)
- GDS recommends aiming for a reading age of 9

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Hemingway
app

Building trust



Trust can come from:

- Design
- Brand awareness
- Content quality

Activity 1

Write a paragraph

Write a paragraph or two telling us about your job.
What do you do, for who and why?



5 minutes

We'll come back to this later.

[Link](#)

The basics

Put the important bits first



- This is where your user needs come in. Why are they here? What do they want to find out?
- Make it easy for them to find info by stating your conclusions upfront. It's way more engaging and it gives them the information they need right away.
- This is referred to as the 'Inverted Pyramid' structure or the 80/20 rule. Basically, if only 20% of your users want to read it, shove it to the bottom

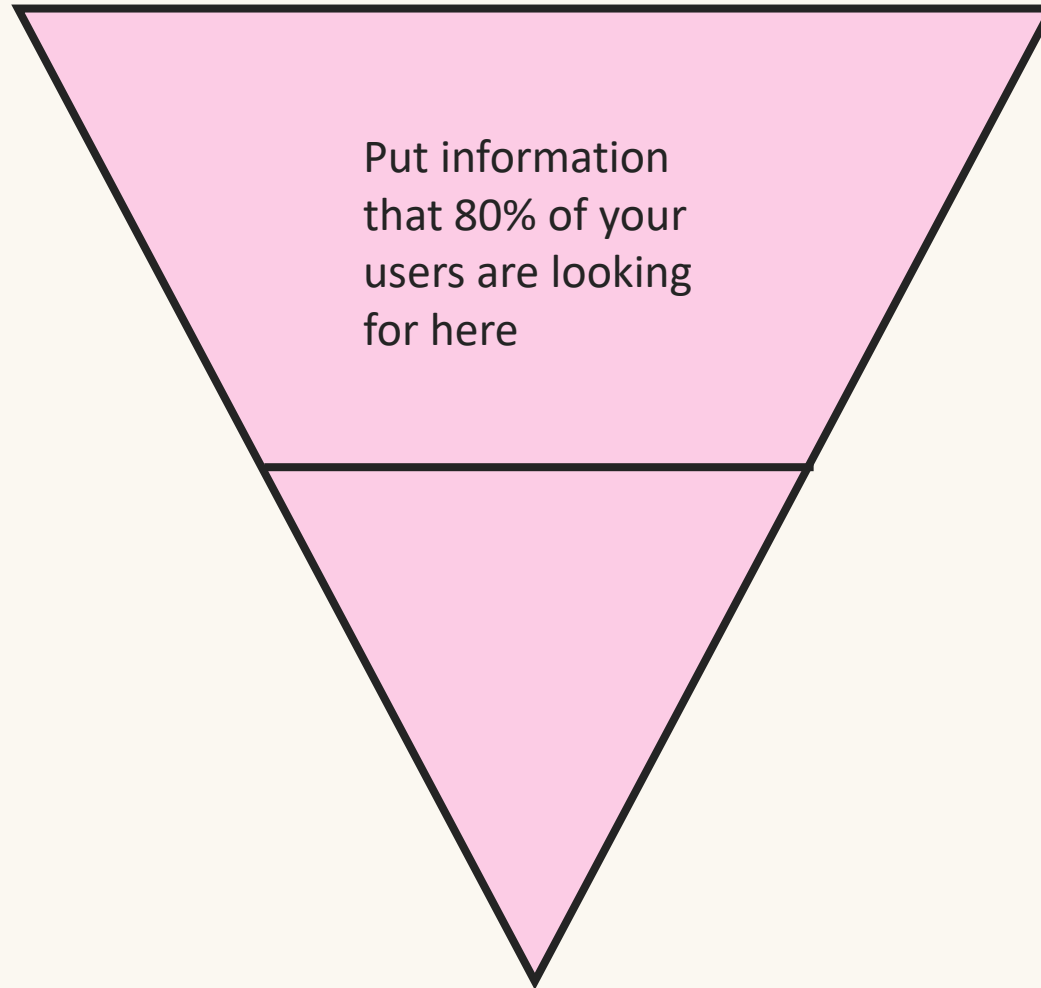
Put the important bits first



Most important

Users only
read about
20 to 28% of
a page

Least important



Put information
that 80% of your
users are looking
for here

Example – before

Directgov
Public services all in one place

Cymraeg | Accessibility | Help | Site Index | **A A A**

Search this site: **Go**

Home | Contacts | Do it online | Newsroom | Video

Thursday, 19 January 2012

Browse by subject

- Crime and justice
- Education and learning
- Employment
 - Employment terms and conditions
 - **Time off and holidays**
- Environment and greener living
- Government, citizens and rights
- Health and well-being
- Home and community
- Money, tax and benefits
- Motoring
- Pensions and retirement planning
- Travel and transport

Employment

Bank holidays and British Summer Time



Bank holidays are holidays when banks and many other businesses are closed for the day. Public holidays are holidays which have been observed through custom and practice. Find out about the bank and public holiday dates and when the clocks go forward and back for British Summer Time.

Bank and public holidays in England and Wales

England and Wales	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
New Year's Day	3 January*	2 January*	1 January	1 January	1 January
Good Friday	22 April	6 April	29 March	18 April	3 April
Easter Monday	25 April	9 April	1 April	21 April	6 April
Royal wedding	29 April	-	-	-	-
Early May Bank Holiday	2 May	7 May	6 May	5 May	4 May
Spring Bank Holiday	30 May	4 June*	27 May	26 May	25 May
Queen's Diamond Jubilee	-	5 June	-	-	-
Summer Bank Holiday	29 August	27 August	26 August	25 August	31 August
Christmas Day	26 December*	25 December	25 December	25 December	25 December
Boxing Day	27 December*	26 December	26 December	26 December	28 December*

National Minimum Wage rates



Find out what the current rates are

- The National Minimum Wage rates

Do it online

- Search for a job
- Calculate your statutory redundancy payment
- Personalised help on your maternity, paternity or adoption rights
- More online tools

People

Android
iPhone
Apple

Example – after

 Menu

[Home](#) > [Working, jobs and pensions](#) > [Holidays, time off, sick leave, maternity and paternity leave](#)

UK bank holidays

England and Wales Scotland Northern Ireland

The next bank holiday in England and Wales is

25 December

Christmas Day

Upcoming bank holidays in England and Wales

2023

Date	Day of the week	Bank holiday
25 December	Monday	Christmas Day
26 December	Tuesday	Boxing Day

Related content

[Holiday entitlement](#)
[School term and holiday dates](#)

Example (bad)



Guidance on permitted development rights

What this means

As of 1 August 2021, there are changes to use classes and to development requirements for prior notification.

Permitted development rights allow you to extend buildings, change uses and undertake works without applying for planning permission.

Example (better)



Guidance on permitted development rights

Permitted development rights allow you to extend buildings, change uses and undertake works without applying for planning permission.

As of 1 August 2021, there are changes to use classes and to development requirements for prior notification.

Example (best)



Guidance on permitted development rights

Permitted development rights allow you to extend buildings, change uses and undertake works without applying for planning permission.

Sentence length



Ideally, our sentences should range in length. But go beyond 21 words and meaning becomes a little murky.

Shorter sentences are easier to understand. There's lots of evidence to back this up.

Plain language and jargon



Yes to plain language



No to jargon

Example



Original:

Engagement prior to any planning application being formally submitted can be critically important and should provide the applicant and the Council with the opportunity to gain a clear understanding of the objectives of and constraints on development. (37 words)

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Talking to the council before you apply helps you understand what's possible with your development plans. (16 words)

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Engagement prior to any planning application being formally submitted **can be** critically important and **should** provide **the applicant** and the Council with the opportunity to gain a clear understanding of the objectives of and constraints on development. (37 words)

Shorter sentence and plain language:

Talking to the council before you apply helps **you** understand what's possible with your development plans. (16 words)

Break it down



Most people skim or scan information online.

Headings and subheadings are a great way to break up text

They help users skip to the information they need easily. And Google loves them.

Bullet points also help. They:

- make text quicker to read
- bring out important info without having to redesign
- break up the page

Example



Before undertaking any work on a tree on private property, including pruning, you should check whether it is covered by a tree preservation order (TPO) OR is within a designated conservation area OR is covered by a legal covenant. You are strongly advised to check with us if you are in any doubt.

Example



Trees on private property

Before undertaking any work on a tree on private property, including pruning, you should check whether it is:

- covered by a tree preservation order (TPO)
- within a designated conservation area
- covered by a legal covenant

You are strongly advised to check with us if you are in any doubt.

Sentence case vs Title Case



Sentence case is:

- easier to read and skim
- easier to maintain consistency
- more human
- less formal
- better for distinguishing proper nouns

This includes headings and subheadings!

Activity 2 – putting it all together

Activity 2



In pairs, look at the piece of content together. What improvements would you make?



10 minutes

We'll come back together to discuss

Think about:

- Inverted pyramid
- Sentence length
- Plain language
- No jargon
- Headers and subheaders
- Bullet points

[Link](#)

Improve this content



Do I Need to Apply for Planning Permission?

Planning Permission is required for “development” as defined in Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

Development is normally granted either by a Development Order, such as the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995 (as amended) (known as “Permitted Development”) or by an application to the Local Planning Authority.

Permitted Development advisory information

Permitted Development Rights set out the conditions and limitations which control extensions and alterations to your house and other works within the curtilage of your property such as erecting outbuildings and providing hard surfaces.

Please note that the Regulations are different in England and Wales and it is important you consider the Welsh Regulations and everything that they entail.

Under permitted development it’s possible to carry out works to your home without the need to formally apply for planning permission.

Welsh Government offer advice and guidance on their website regarding [permitted development for householders](#) and on [common projects](#).

Whilst the previously mentioned resources give good guidance, it's always advisable to check your proposals against the legislation directly to ensure what is proposed does constitute permitted development.

The householder permitted development enquiries process with associated fee of £25 and permitted development enquiry form ceased on 1 April 2023.

However, the Local Planning Authority does provides a Duty Planning Officer service to provide general, informal advice on general planning queries on Mondays (face-to-face or phone) and Thursdays (phone during the hours specified on the [Contact the Planning Team page](#)).

Specific advice on planning applications should be directed to the case officer who will be familiar with the proposals.

Any advice given by the Local Planning Authority represents an Officer’s informal opinion and is not legally binding on the Council. For a legally binding decision on permitted development matters you must apply for a [Certificate of Lawfulness](#).

Before starting any work you are obliged to ensure that you have all necessary permissions in place (including Building Regulations). Any unauthorised development carried out without planning permission could be liable to enforcement action and subsequent prosecution by the council.

Activity 1 returns

Activity 1



Content design your paragraph!



10 minutes

We'll come back together to discuss.

[Link](#)

Things that might help with ODP

[How to write good planning service content \(Notion\)](#)

Where all the content guides sit – help with question writing, help text, error messages etc.

[Tone of voice guidelines \(Notion\)](#)

What we sound like – how to get the ODP essence into your writing

[Style guide \(Notion\)](#)

The specifics – what words to use, how to format dates, what to capitalise etc

Resources and more reading

Candi Williams' talk Word to the words (YouTube)

<https://readabilityguidelines.co.uk/>

What is content design and why does it matter? (Nomensa)

What is content design? (GOV.UK)

About Nomensa

Our service capabilities

Strategy

Brand experience strategy
Social strategy

User Research

Qualitative & Quantitative
Expert evaluation
Usability testing

Technology

Mobile, Full stack
Solutions architecture
Hosting and support

Accessibility

Digital inclusion strategy
Auditing and Testing
Training & Empathy labs

Design

Digital brand experience
Product and service design
Content design

Data and Performance

Data architecture
Social Media Monitoring
SEO performance
Data analytics

Product Delivery

Agile delivery
Capability building
Leadership & Culture change

Our experience we provide from across sectors



Thank you

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