PDP Website Brand Review

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Contents

1. Introduction

For this assignment the current website at pensionsdashboardsprogramme.org.uk/ will be reviewed and recommendations will be made to update the design and structure where necessary.

The homepage went through some significant redesign which will need to be addressed with the other pages on our website. Certain aspects of these other pages are still using the old branding and it is important to update these areas to improve brand awareness. Suggestions will also be made to improve the organization and presentation of the content provided so that visitors could quickly navigate to desired pages.

Firstly, a quick audit will be done to evaluate and grade the website on key areas of SEO and web design with suggestions for improvements. Then a design review of the website will be carried out in order to bring consistency with our brand.

2. Website audit

Website Architecture

Criteria	Best practice	Score	How to improve
Content silos present	A content silo is simply a directory structure that organizes the content and makes it easy for visitors to know where to find content on the website. A good structure would be website.com/SEO/on-page-optimisation. In the example given, **SEO** is a content silo or directory. Search engines digest slashes as sections and dashes as word separators	Fail	A directory should be created for all pages. For example, pages like the **Vision** and **Who we work for** should go in a directory called **About us**.
SEO friendly URL structure	A Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is an address used to identify a specific page on a website. It contains the site's main domain plus the name of the specific page or post. Example: website.com/contact. The industry best practice is to use SEO friendly URL structures, which refer to page names within the URL as opposed to characters or numbers.	Pass	
Sitemap.xml used	An XML Sitemap page is submitted to search engines such as Google or Bing via Webmaster Tools. Sitemaps make it easier for search engines to discover the pages on a website and it clearly defines a preferred URL structure.	Unsure	Unsure if a sitemap.xml file has been used but it would be ideal for SEO optimization of the site.
Proper 404 page	Visitors will occasionally come to a page that doesn't exist. This can occur due to an outdated inbound link from another website or search engine or a broken link on the website or even by manually typing in the wrong URL. Having a custom	Pass	Example page is available here: pensionsdash boardsprogramme.org.uk/ working-groups/ However, the look and feel of this page will need to be updated and a link to guide

	404 page that guides users back to a working page on the site can greatly improve the user's overall experience.		users back to a working page will need to be added.
Google Analytics installed	Google Analytics is a powerful tool that shows where people come from, what they do, and when they leave. Bounce rate (people who leave the website as soon as they arrive) is taken into account in ranking the page for a given search term. The bounce rate needs to be controlled and Google Analytics is a great and free way to monitor it.	Unsure	Unsure if Google Analytics is embedded into the pages but would be useful to have.
RSS feed available	RSS is an abbreviation for Really Simple Syndication, which is an industry standard for easily delivering content to visitors and other websites. RSS is commonly used with blogs, news feeds, and other formatted news or other sources of information.	Unsure	Unsure if this is available as the RSS icon or link can't be found.
Conversion form for FeedBurner or Newsletter	When visitors locate a quality website, they generally want to stay up to date with the site's content updates. Having a way for visitors to subscribe to a website is critical for this to occur. RSS feed subscriptions via Google's FeedBurner or email subscribe boxes (Constant Contact, Bronto, MailChimp, etc.) should be in the sidebar of every page and one of the top call to actions.	Fail	Allowing people to subscribe to RSS feeds and newsletters should be available in all pages especially on blog posts. Subscribing to newsletters is available in the footer but the option to add an RSS subscription link should be there too.
Sharing options for website visitors	Blogging is integral to link building and driving inbound traffic. Without adequate sharing options, this cannot occur. Best practice for sharing content is to have easy to use and easy to recognize options for visitors to share blog posts and/or web pages.	Pass	At the moment sharing is available to LinkedIn, Twitter and via email. Facebook, Google+ and Pinterest should be considered even though the company has no presence on those sites.

Website Usability

Criteria	Best practice	Score	How to improve
Consistent website formatting	Consistent formatting refers to a standard template for navigation, headers, text, typography and hyperlinks. This template can be used site-wide so users can easily differentiate sections of text and/or hyperlinks from standard text.	Pass	
Layout meets best practice	Every website should include sections dedicated to a header, content, and footer. Sidebars, sections to the right or left of content are also commonly used. Header and footer should remain uniform across the website.	Pass	
Navigation used appropriately	Every website that is more than one page should include a navigation bar or section. This navigation bar typically resides in the header and lists all top level (most important) pages. Lower level (children) pages can be included as needed. Navigation options should be no more three levels deep. All pages should be accessible from the home page and reached within three clicks by the user.	Pass	
Content is free of spelling and grammatical errors	Grammatically correct content and website elements are free of spelling errors, properly edited and written in the authors native language. Double check all content for errors prior to posting and take the time to run content through spellchecking devices prior to posting.	Pass	

Content is easy to read and digest	Creating useful content will influence the website SEO ranking more than any of the other factors. Easy to read content refers to content that is digestible and conforms to the average person's typical reading pattern. Most website visitors read text from left to right and in an F-shaped pattern. Longer articles or large blocks of text should be broken out by the appropriate use of sections or subheaders. It is also advisable to use a mix of paragraphs and bullets, so that it can capture the attention of both in-depth readers and those that simply scan a web copy.	Pass
Readability level is appropriate	This measures the level of education necessary to read and understand the web page content. In most cases, the content should be made to be simple so that a majority of the target audience can understand it. If a user cannot digest the content, they will not stay on the website.	Pass
Page titles accurately represent content	Each website page should have a clear and concise title that effectively communicates the topic of the page's content. Choose a descriptive title and avoid using default titles or vague titles like "Untitled" or "Page 1".	Pass
Contact information is available on every page	If a website visitor is interested in the product or service being offered, they should be able to quickly find this information. Best practice is to include one primary phone number in the header of the website. This will help visitors to	Pass

	connect and it will help search engines to associate the page content with local searches and results.		
Website has a complete Contact us page	Full contact information builds trust and it makes it very easy for potential customers to reach out. The contact page should provide a street address, city, state, zip code, full phone number, and an email address that is checked regularly.	Pass	
Clear call to actions is present	A call to action is a phrase that asks a user to make a specific action or tells a user on how to proceed. These requests should be clearly identified and be comprised of concise text that is actionable. Home pages should have no more than three or four call to actions.	Pass	
Visitor sitemap is present	A visitor sitemap is a visible list of all the pages for a given domain or website. Search engines sometimes use sitemaps to discover new pages on a domain, while users use a sitemap to browse a hierarchy list of available content. Sitemaps include only pages or they can include posts, categories, tags or authors.	Pass	Available here: pensions dashboardsprogramme.org.uk/ sitemap/
Favicon is used	A favicon is a 16x16 pixel image that is also known as a shortcut key. Browsers that provide favicon support typically display a page's favicon in the browser's address bar and next to the page's name in a list of bookmarks. Favicons help provide branding for the website and support ease of use while reviewing bookmarks for a particular website or link.	Fail	There are different favicon sizes and processes for different contexts. Favicons should be supported for as many different devices as possible. These would include Android, Apple and others.

As an example, when adding the website to favourites on iPhone there were no icon to represent the website. |

No animated images	Constant animations can be distracting to most visitors. There should be no more than one animated object in view at any one time and in modern websites, such animation should be used for advertisements or call to actions.	Pass	
No automatic music or video	Automatically launching a music file or video will annoy most visitors. This type of design was popular years ago, but modern-day users find it distracting. Use of such practices will produce lower rates of user satisfaction and in turn increase bounce rate levels.	Pass	
No frames	Frames segment out content into two separate sections. Frames present a variety of problems including support for older browsers, user navigation, and the search engines ability to crawl the page successfully. Frames should be avoided at all possible.	Pass	
No Flash	Flash is a method of displaying movable or dynamic content. Flash is difficult for search engines to digest and index, as well as utilizes a great deal of bandwidth. Flash is generally not supported on mobile devices such as the iPhone and iPad.	Pass	

On-page Optimization

Criteria	Best practice	Score	How to improve
Meta titles unique to each page	A meta title tag is the line code or text that describes an online document such as a web page or file. It is important to avoid duplicate meta titles tags, as it degrades a page's value in the eyes of search engines. Google Webmaster Tools will provide a list of any duplicates that exist on the website.	Pass	
Correct use of H1 title tags	Search engines expect to see only one H1 title tag, as it is the top of the heading hierarchy. The H1 title tag should use the page's targeted keyword and provide a quick summary of the page's overall content. Ideally there should only be one H1 tag per page or post.	Pass	
Anchor text in internal links	Anchor text is the clickable text that users will see for a given hyperlink. The better the anchor text is, the easier it is for the users to navigate and for search engines to understand what the page being linked to is all about. Anchor text that includes a keyword (where appropriate) is always better than nondescript and generic text such as "click here".	Pass	
Alt attributes for images	The "alt" attribute specifies text for an image so that it can be used in the event of an image not being viewable. If a user is viewing the website on a device that doesn't support images or is using a screen reader, the text within the alt attribute will provide information about the picture. Utilizing good alt text is beneficial for both the user and search engines.	Pass	

3. Design review

Homepage redesign

Initial observation of the original homepage revealed a clean and easy to follow layout which made it easy for users to gain access to information, but in terms of design the website looked very formulaic and basic. It was agreed that improvements could be made here. Also, informative information such as the explainer videos and glossary definitions were hidden away in many layers of navigation and wasn't easy to find. It was important to bring these elements to the forefront to further the users understanding of the service that was being provided.

The screenshot below shows the original website on the left and the eventual redesign on the right.
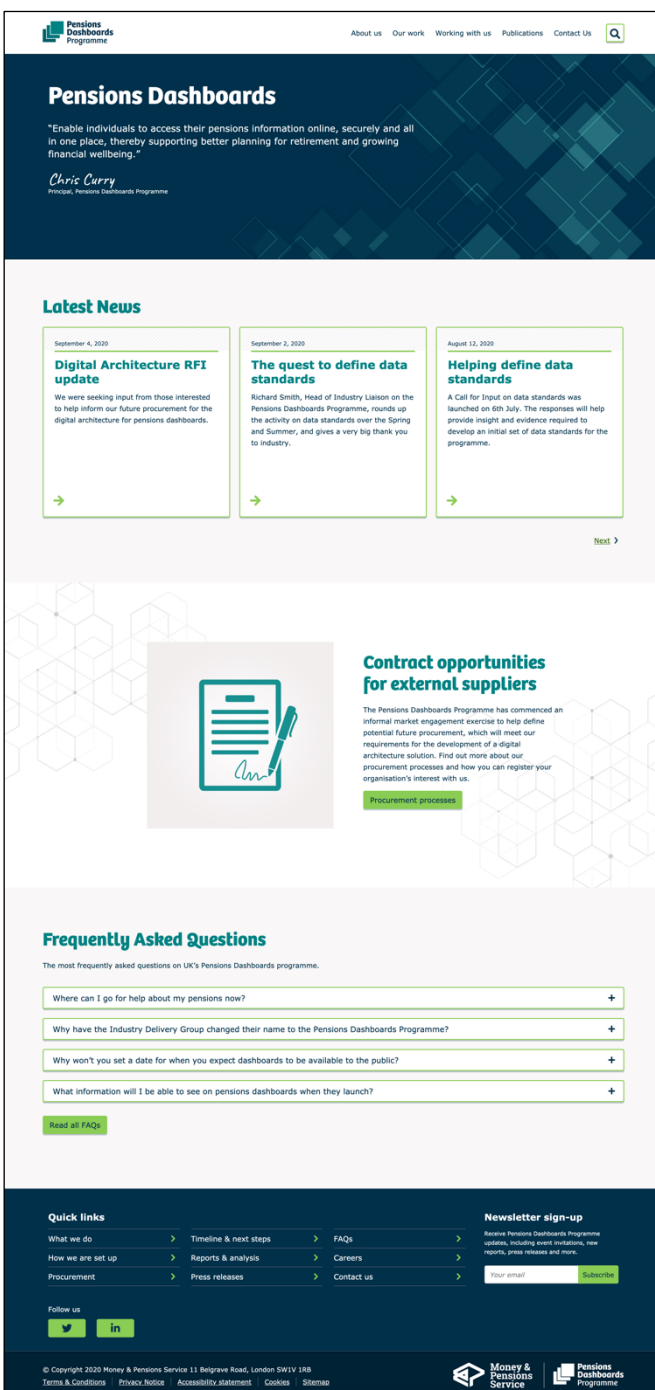
It was important to keep the branding consistent when bringing in new design elements. Subtle changes were made to the homepage with the introduction of new icons, imagery, hexagonal patterns and boxed out sections to separate content for easy digestion. Variations of the colours from the brand palette were used. The typography, headers, menu, footer and buttons followed the original design system. Enough changes were made to the homepage to make it look different and interesting but familiar to the current branding.

Going forward, these new design elements would need to be introduced to the other pages on the website for brand consistency.

Some issues

On mobile view of the homepage some spacing issues were discovered which would need to be addressed. Please see screenshot below.
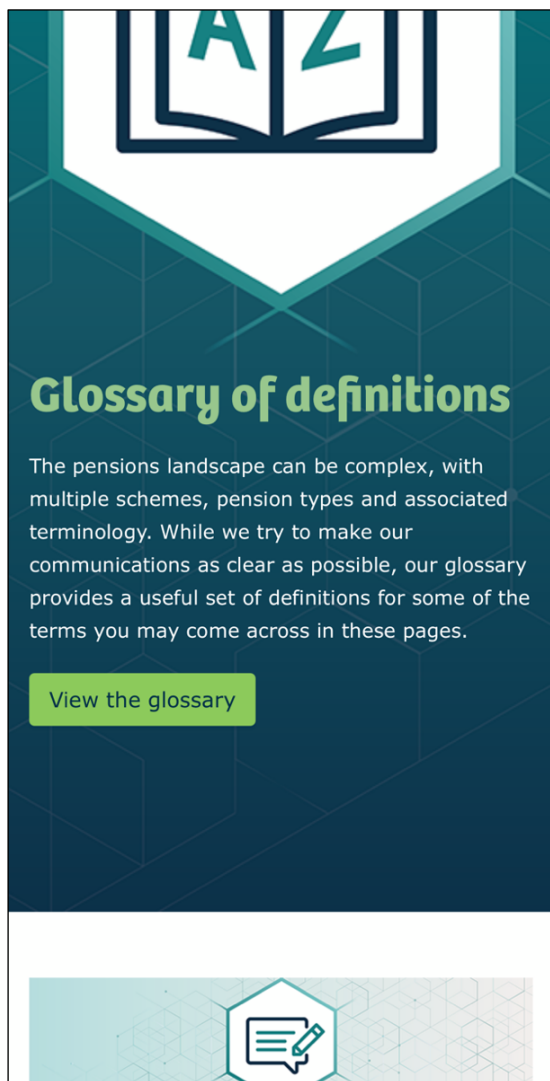
Unusual spacing

Blog homepage

The screenshot below shows the current blog homepage.
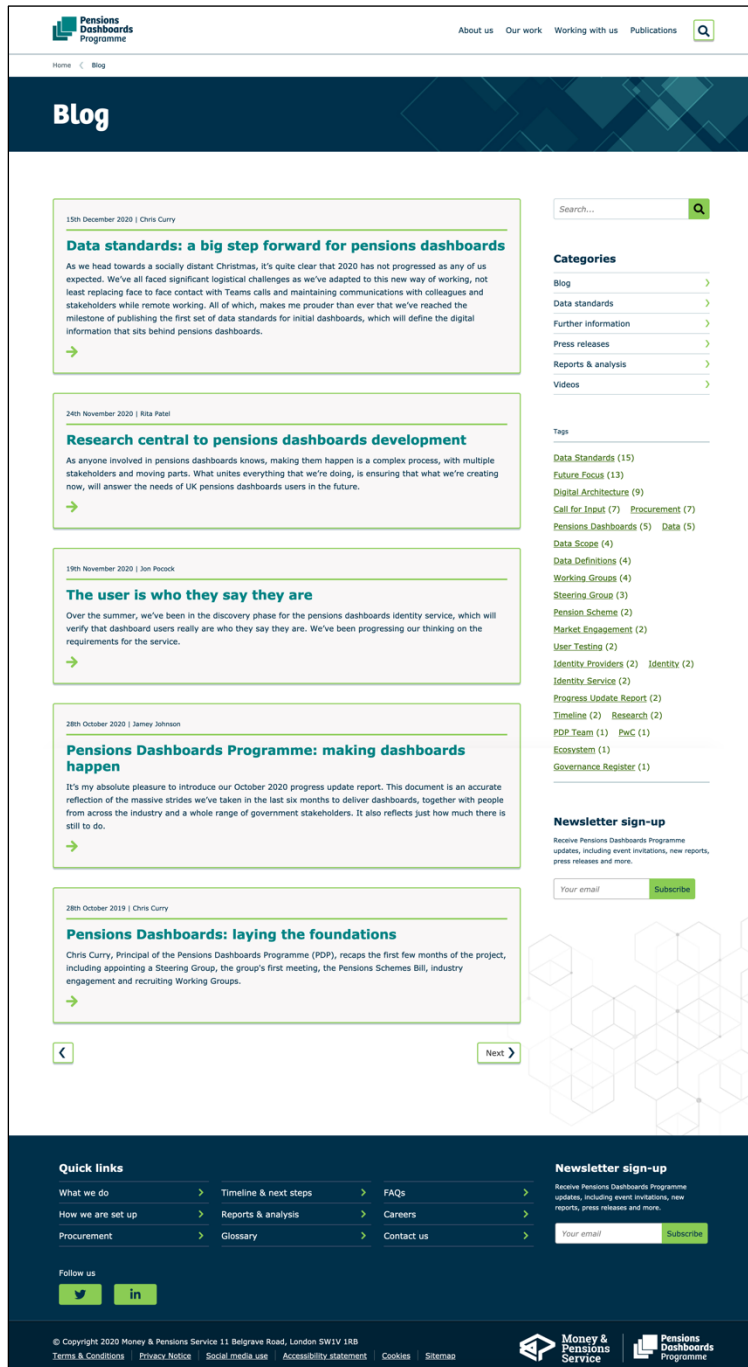
Initial observation of the page revealed a clean two-column layout that utilized the grid system to keep the blog content easily legible. The column on the left is where the main content is made available with each new post separated into a boxed card layout. The column on the right is utilized for search purposes where users are able to find blogs according to categories and tag labels. In terms of design it feels very text heavy, outdated and would struggle to hold the attention of the user for long.

Header

The header will need to be updated to include the new hexagonal patterns and probably will need to use the branded teal colour as the background.

Blog card layout

The blog card layout can be better organized to quickly communicate information without hitting visitors with information overload. The architecture of the cards helps users to easily recognize, recall, and read the information that's important.

Big players like Pinterest, Twitter, and Google have it ingrained in their UX. Some examples are shown below.
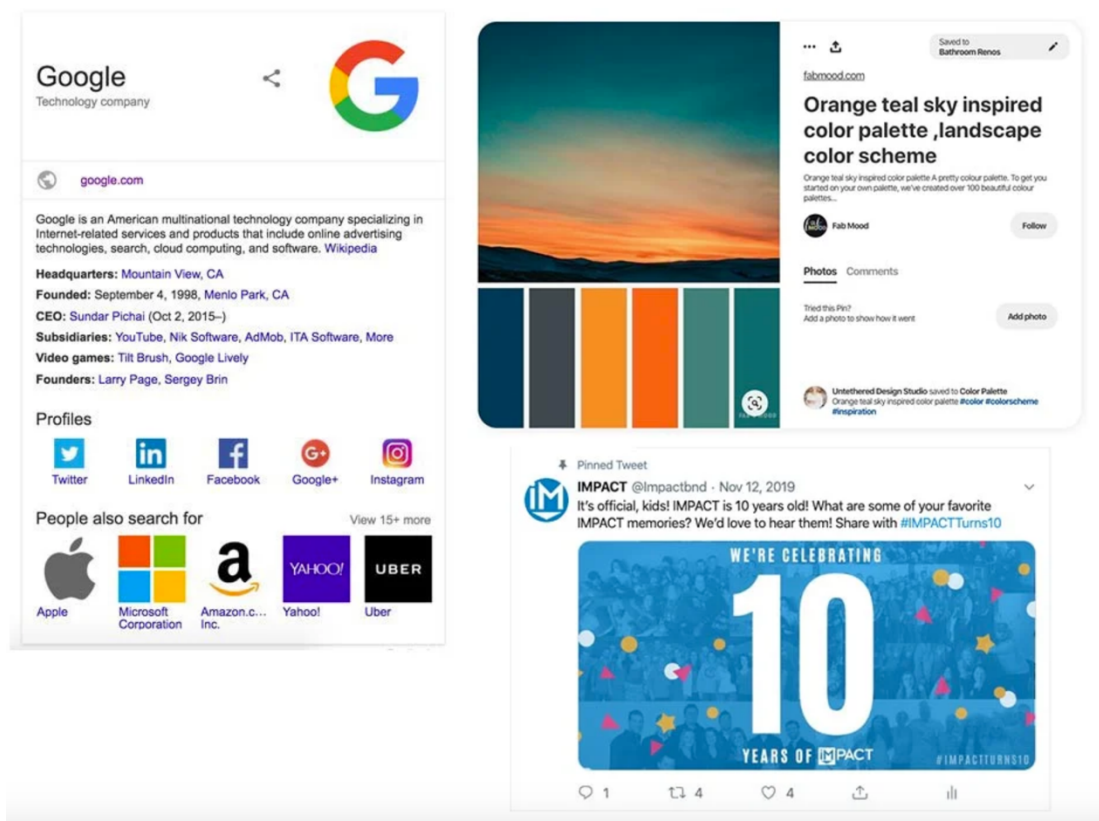
Currently the blog cards are very text heavy and monotonous. It also takes up too much real estate. Using different images and font sizes to represent the most important to least important elements of the card will make them more legible for those reading them.

Having looked at examples of other blogs it is recommended to focus on incorporating the following elements into the cards (the bold are essential).

- **Featured image**
- **Blog title**
- **Blog author (and image, if there's room)**
- **Blog excerpt**
- **Post date**
- **Category**
- Social share links
- Read More button

At the moment only the blog title, blog author, blog excerpt and post date are available in the cards. The blog excerpt would need to be reduced greatly by keeping the word count to under 50. If space is an issue, certain elements like the social share links or category can appear when the mouse hovers over the card.

Imagery

Study after study has proven that when users go online today, they're attracted to images before text. One of the current trends across many blogs is incorporating large, non-stocky hero images for each blog card and inner blog post. Splicing the blog with images is a UX necessity. This will greatly help to reduce the monotony of the current cards and offer readers a visual break, which is important when consuming vast on-screen content.

Consistency is important and the blog cards would need to adhere to the following best practices for images.

- Use the same sizing across images
- When highlighting image aspects, use branded colours
- Use the alt img tags to help boost the blog's SEO

These images would either be branded icons or illustrations which would correspond with the feature image used in the blog post.

Add more sections

To break the monotony of the many blog cards, it would be ideal to have a featured post section where the most important post can be pinned at the top of the page. It would also help to see which article is being read the most by have a trending section.

Layout

Currently the blog cards take up the entire width of the page, and to see all the other historical posts a lot of scrolling is required through the lengthy page. It is proposed that a 3-column layout should be introduced so that more can be seen on the screen at any one time. Only the featured blog post will take up the entire width. The screenshot below shows what the proposed page layout would look like.
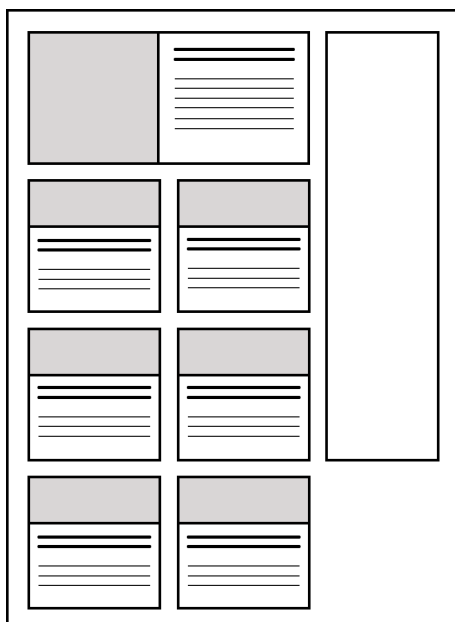
Content filter

Filters are a great tool to narrow down high volumes of content and to surface the most relevant results. Currently content can be filtered via categories and tags but some important options are missing, for example filtering by author or date is not possible.

Users can only view one category, tag, or archive page at a time and only show one post type. Option to allow users to filter content in more than one category or tag should be available. This kind of filtering can be particularly helpful when there is a lot of content, and the users wants to filter according to their own preferences.

The right column is also populated with a long list of links and to see everything will require a lot of scrolling. To tackle this issue, it would be ideal to break each section into tabs so that the users could choose what they want to see. The screenshot below shows an example of tabbed sections.

For the blog homepage it is proposed that tabs for Trending, Categories and Tags should be available.

Blog post page

The screenshot below shows the current blog post page.

The design for this page will need to be updated to include new elements introduced in the homepage redesign.

Breadcrumb trail

Inconsistencies with the breadcrumb trail section of this page will need to be addressed. On the blog homepage it is on a white background, whereas on this page it's on a teal background, both shown below.

This could be jarring when a user navigates from the blog homepage into the blog post and so the design for this section will need to look consistent.

Author image

The author image could be put into the branded hexagonal shape as shown below.

Header

For the header a large feature image should be incorporated with the content pushed down but viewable before the fold. It will act as a compelling element to help connect the user to the article before the line of reading anything beyond the title or author. Also, in terms of hierarchy, it adds a nice anchor to the top of the page, allowing the user to easily recognize where the article begins.

It is important to allow the featured image size to be large enough for it to hold enough visual weight to stand out from the elements in close proximity to it. The image can go full width of the page or can be contained to the grid, which will allow the users to see the content peeking into the fold.

The image for the header could either incorporate branded icons or use illustrations with branded patterns overlaid.

Example featured images shown below has an image taking the full width of a page, and an image contained inside a grid.
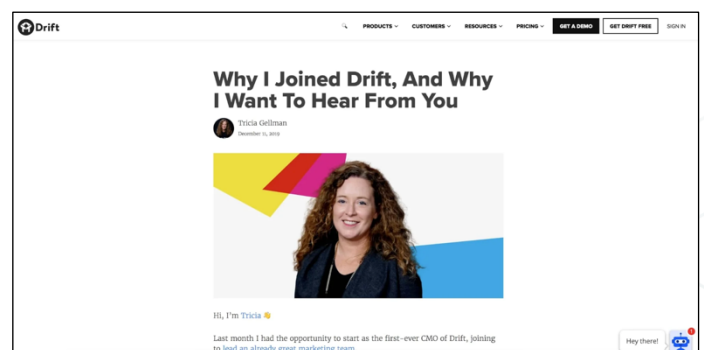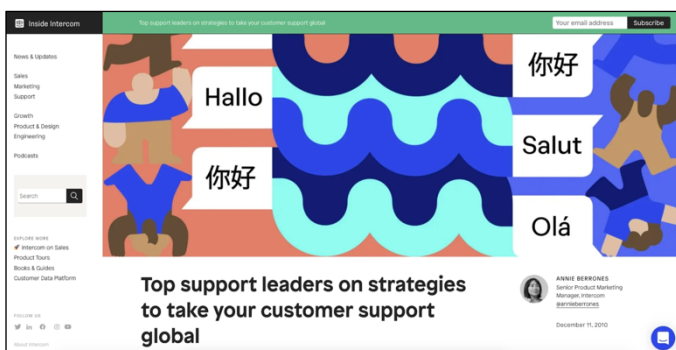
Content filter

Similar to the blog homepage, tabbed sections could be incorporated to the right column so that the users could choose what they want to see. The screenshot below shows an example of a tabbed section.

For the blog post it is proposed that tabs for Trending, Categories and Tags should be available.

Thumbnail images

To break the monotony of large chunks of text, small secondary thumbnail images related to the article could be embedded to make the page more interesting. Images are more than just decoration, they have the power to drive traffic to a website, improve user experience, strengthen a brand's identity, and build a loyal bond with users.

However, not all articles will need imagery. Conscious decisions will need to be made about when and where to incorporate imagery and it should never be added just because it looks pretty. Questions need to be asked like, "Will the story live on without it?" and "Does this reflect our brand or business authentically?". This will help to avoid visual overkill and instead, captivate users in the right ways.

Photos can be used to show something specific, whereas illustrations can represent something conceptual.

Social sharing

Social sharing is available for LinkedIn, Twitter and via email. Users should also have the option to share on other social channels for wider reach including Facebook, Google+ and Pinterest even if the company has no presence on those sites.

Search results page

The screenshot below shows the current search results page.
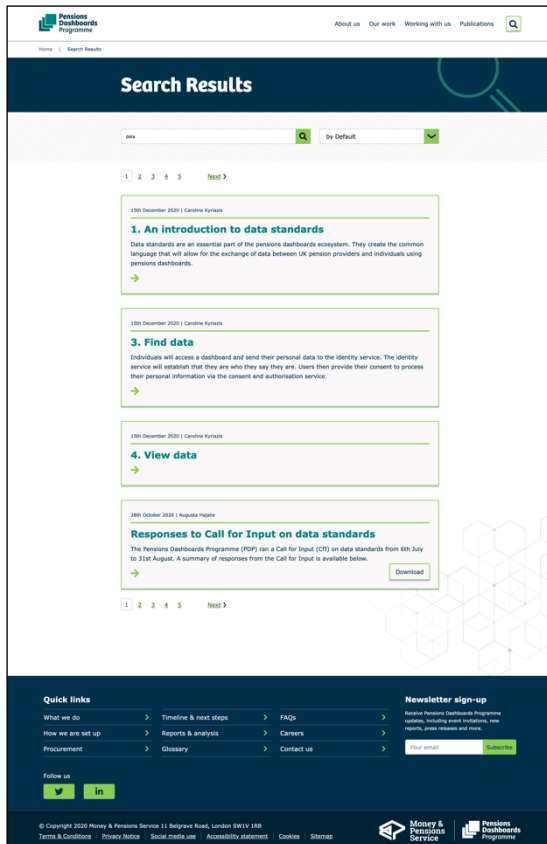
The search results appear in boxes taking up the entire width of the grid. Pagination is available at the top and bottom. Similar to the blog homepage the design feels very text heavy, outdated and would struggle to hold the attention of the user for long.

Layout

In terms of the layout it is proposed a 3-column grid should be used, with the search results outputting 8 cards on each page, with the pagination available at the top and bottom. The right column will be utilized for the search filters. The screenshot below shows the proposed layout.
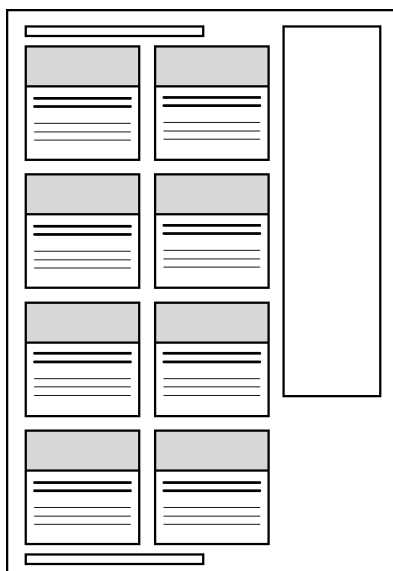
Each card will have the following information (the bold are essential).

- **Featured image**
- **Blog title**
- **Blog author (and image, if there's room)**
- **Blog excerpt**
- **Post date**
- **Category**
- Social share links
- Read More button

Header

The header at the moment with the magnifying glass icon is not branded and will need to be updated to reflect the new brand.

Add filters

Filters should be added so that users can search articles by author, date, categories and tags. Users should be able to filter content in more than one category or tag. This kind of filtering can be particularly helpful when there is a lot of content, and the users wants to filter according to their own preferences.

The right column can be utilized to include top 10 searches and trending topics which will be incorporated as tabbed sections.

Some issues

Currently for the search box the following filters are available.
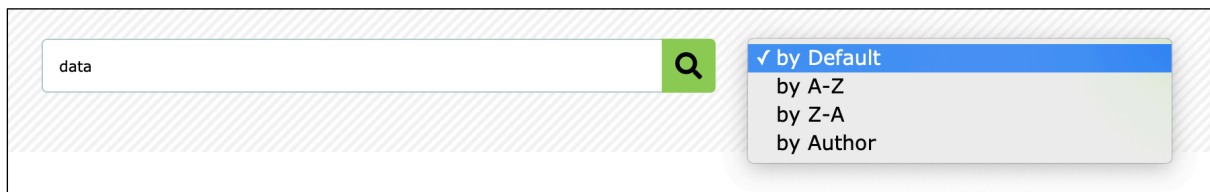
Filtering by A-Z and Z-A seems like a superfluous option and clicking on Author doesn't allow the users to drill into articles by the authors name. This section needs to be greatly improved.

404 page

The screenshot below shows the current 404 page.
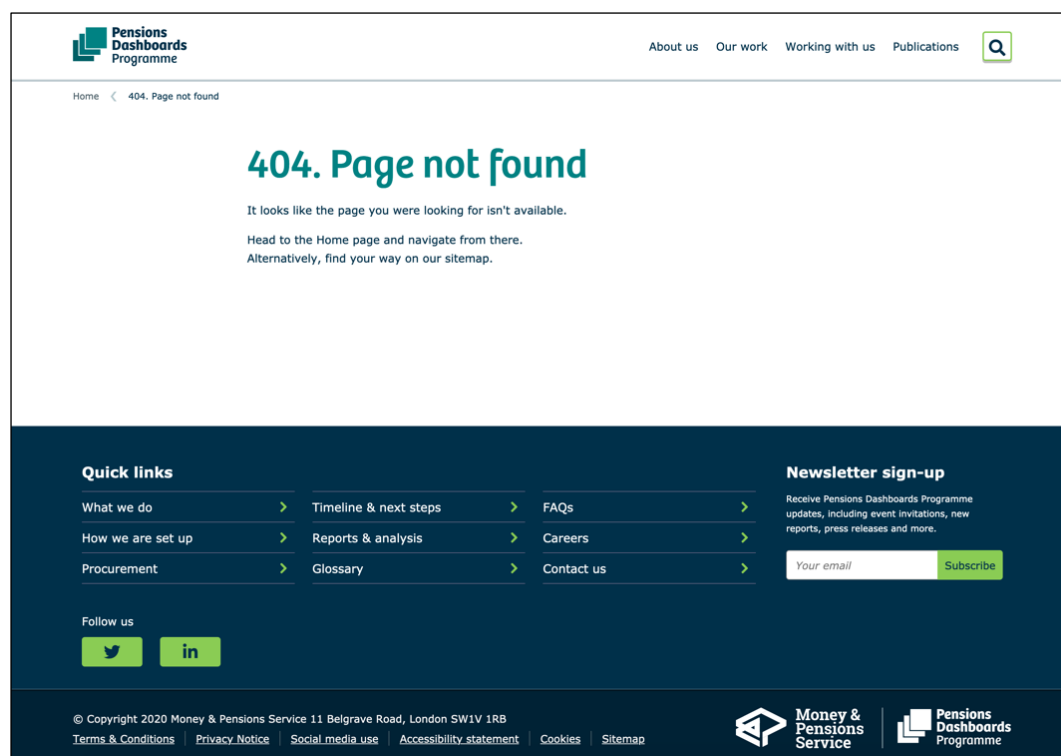
The 404 page has some copy and looks fairly minimal. A well designed error page can boost usability, improve user experience and even raise a smile. This page should be used to transform sources of frustration into opportunities for conversion and branding.

What to include

At a bare minimum the 404 page should include the following elements.

- **An error message**
  Users need to recognize immediately that they've landed on an error page.
- **Brand look and feel**
  The 404 page needs to match the look and feel of the entire site.
- **A light touch**
  A little comic relief is always welcome on an error page but shouldn't be overdone.
- **Link to best content**
  It is a great opportunity to link to 3 or 4 great pieces of great content, which would help guide lost visitors to something they find interesting. Losing traffic should be avoided at all costs, even from an error page.
- **Call to action**
  The 404 page serves as a landing page, so some landing page logic should be applied by adding a download or signup button, or at the very least, a search box.

Below are examples of good 404 pages that follow most of the requirements set out in the previous page.
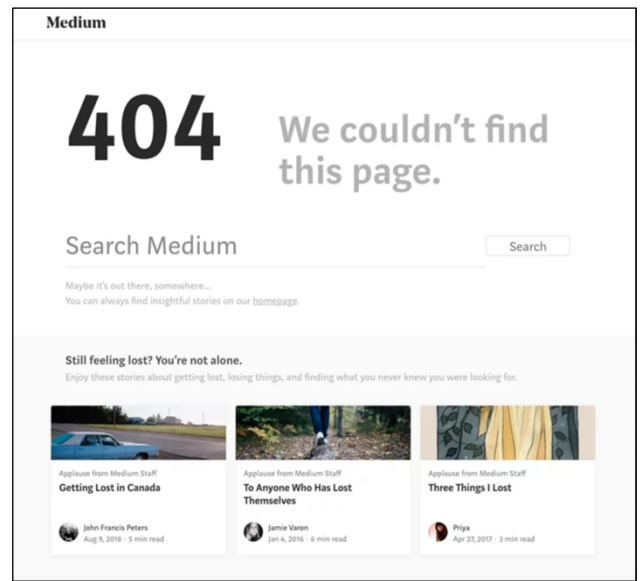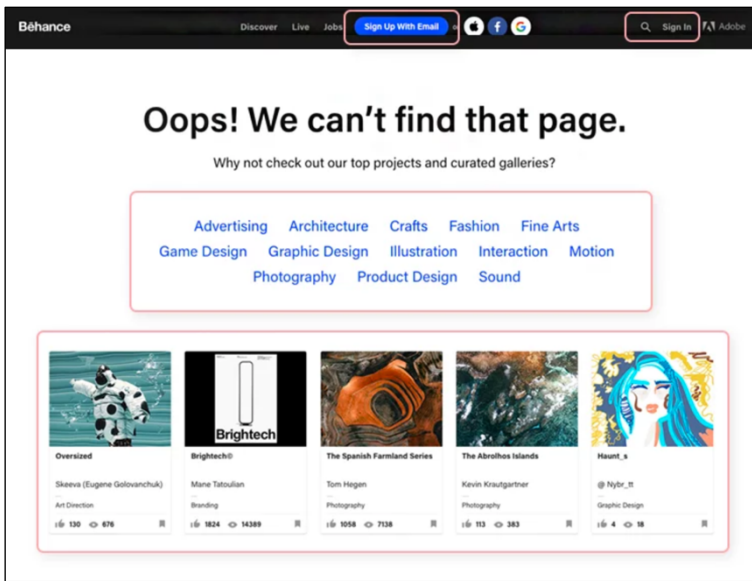

Imagery

As well adding some funny copy, the negative experience of reaching a 404 page could also be brightened up by showing some pleasant imagery or animation to make the page more interesting. Basic best practices for images should be followed such as ensuring the aesthetics of the page fit with the rest of the site, copy mirrors the tone throughout, and that icons and visuals are coherent with branding.

Below are some good examples of humorous illustrations used on 404 pages.
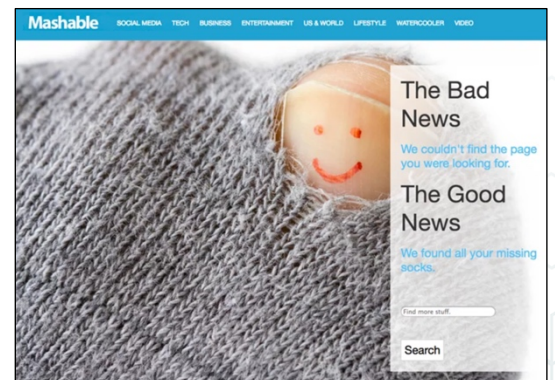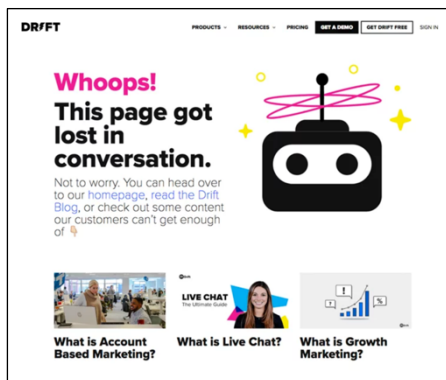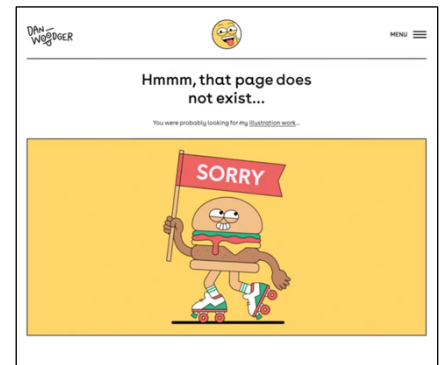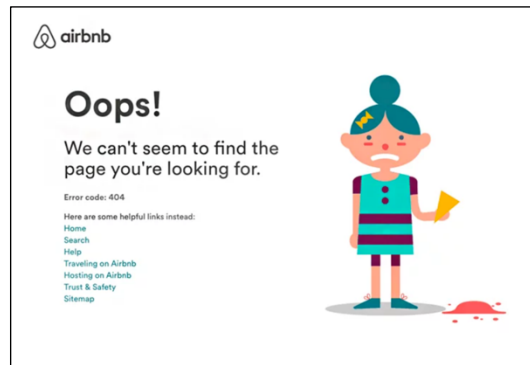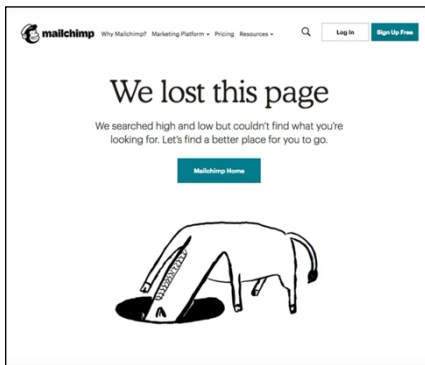
Single page template

The screenshot below shows the current single page template.
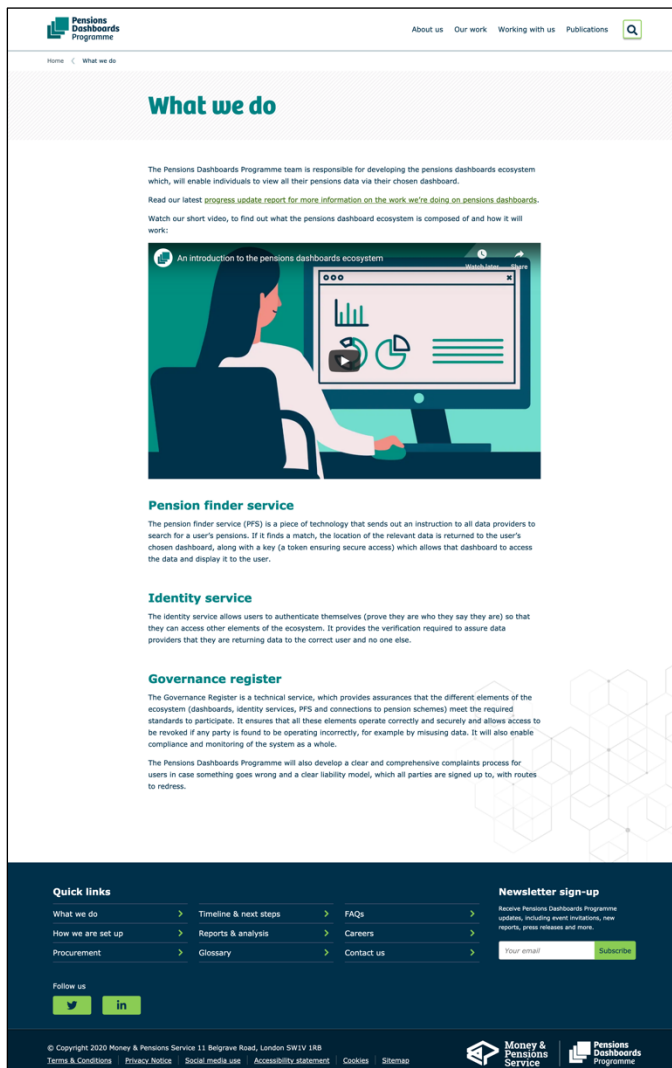
This page follows a standard layout for content with a heading, sub heading and copy. At the moment it is not on brand and can be greatly improved.

Header

The header background currently has a striped pattern running across it which needs to be changed. This header should match the design used in the blog homepage and search results page so that everything is consistent in terms of branding.

Thumbnails

Thumbnails should be embedded into the article if it complements the copy. It will make the content digestible and will break up the monotony of reading large chunks of text.

Include summary sections

Most articles written could be summarised in a sentence or two. If someone is just looking for a quick summary, skimming a 4000-word article to find it might be a little tedious. This is where a short summary box can be really useful.

Traditionally these are placed towards the beginning of the article. Some examples are shown below.
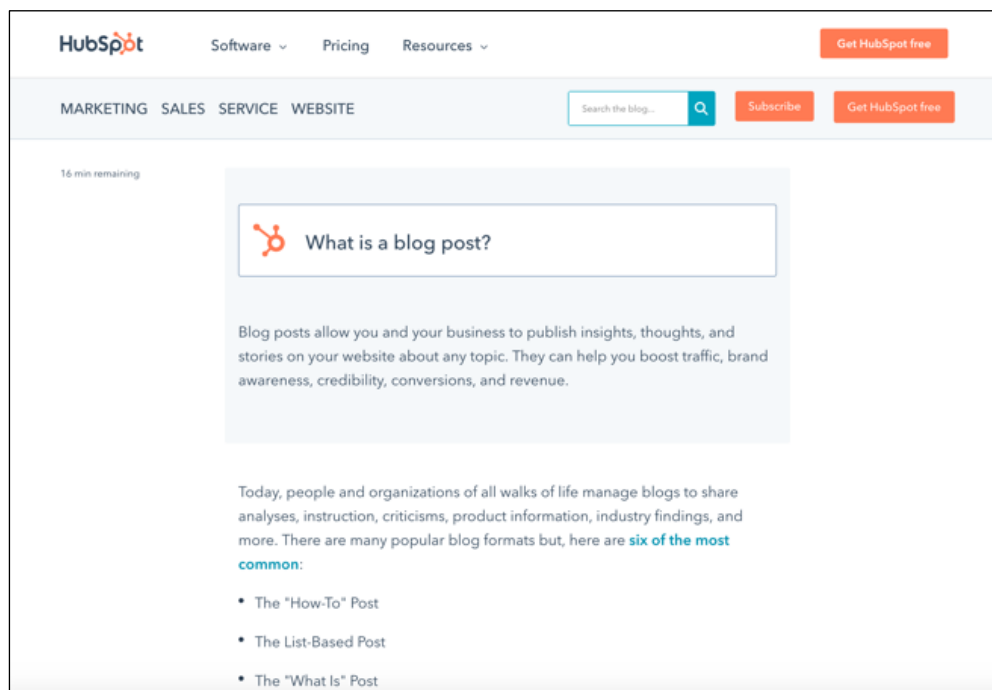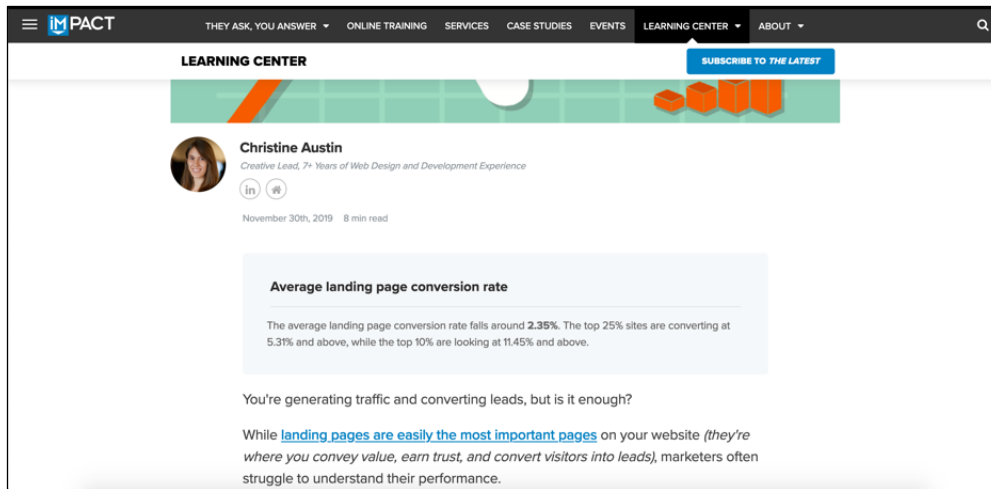
Advantage for doing this, aside from getting the user the answer they want faster, is to improve SEO rankings. Google will often use the content in these boxes for featured snippets. This will mean an increase in click-throughs for the articles.
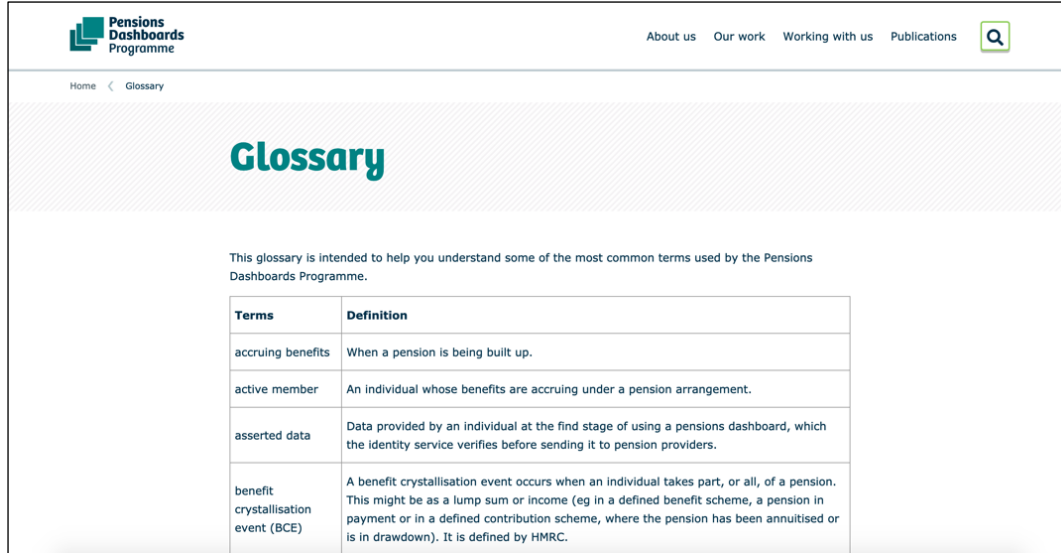
Some issues

Breadcrumb trails are not correct. In the example screenshot used for the single page template, **What we do** should come after **Our work**. The structure in the sitemap should be followed: pensionsdashboardsprogramme.org.uk/sitemap/

Miscellaneous elements

Tables

The tables in the glossary section is not on-brand. See screenshot below.

Fixes to make include showing only horizontal lines as this reduces the visual noise of a full grid. This style includes plenty of white space while still helping the user to keep their place while reading. It is the most commonly used and is recommended for all data set sizes.

Also, alternating different colour backgrounds for each row is another good way to help users keep their place while reading. This style is recommended for larger data sets where the alternating pattern will be clear and not cause confusion that a particular row is highlighted.

Example screenshot below is a proposal of how the tables should look.

Ref	Data element	Description	Optionality
1.001	Given name	Given name/Forename	Mandatory
1.002	Name	Surname of the individual	Mandatory
1.003	Date of birth	Date of birth of the individual	Mandatory
1.004	NI number	National Insurance number of the individual	Mandatory
1.005	NI number assertion	Identifies whether the NI number has been asserted	Mandatory
1.006	Alternate name type	Type of any alternate surname(s) of the individual	Conditional
1.007	Alternate name	Any alternate surname(s) of the individual	Optional
1.008	Alternate name assertion	Identifies whether the alternate name has been asserted	Conditional