



ENABLING ALL

Working to build church communities
with people of all abilities

A Resource Pack for Churches

With thanks to the Church of Ireland Youth Department, United
Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough and the Diocese of Leeds for
their collaboration.

**strengthening
Communities**

 **DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD**

This pack is designed to help you as a church think through some of the issues and challenges involved in enabling church to be more accessible.

We recognise that including people with a disability and neurodivergent people in the life of the church is a Biblical mandate.

We acknowledge that this is an area which the church needs to address proactively.

People with a disability and neurodivergent people should be able to access our churches, not just as members of the congregation, but as people who may also contribute to leadership.

We would all agree that we would want fully to include everyone in the life of the Church, and now we are required by law to ensure that we do not discriminate against people with a disability or neurodivergence. The Equality Act applies to churches, as “service providers”, and as voluntary organisations, and they are required to comply with this legislation.

This legislation gives us a very broad definition of the term disability: “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

There are around 10 million people with a disability in the UK and around 600,000 in Ireland.

Wheelchair-users are about 7.5% of all “disabled” people.

95% of people will experience a disabling condition at some time in their lives.

There are many “hidden” disabilities: for example, epilepsy, autism, arthritis and other

conditions which cause significant levels of pain, diabetes, fibromyalgia, endometriosis and mental health problems.

People with a disability or neurodivergence are all different, all individual, and even people with the same impairment have differing needs and experiences.

The Equality Act is anticipatory - it is not sufficient to wait until someone with a particular need turns up in church - we should be thinking how our welcome, worship, teaching and other activities can include everyone.

The Equality Act requires us to make “reasonable adjustments” to features which could be barriers to disabled people. “Reasonable” is not defined in law, but it is recognised, for example, that a small church with a small congregation may well be less able to provide certain facilities than a large church or cathedral with more resources.

However, there is much that can be done at little or no cost to improve our welcome and accessibility for disabled people.

Listed buildings or those of special historic interest are not exempt from the Equality Act.

There are a great many resources available to guide us in this process, and Access Audits are also available.

Few churches will be able to do all that this guide suggests. But we can all improve on what we do and right attitudes matter most.

There is no one size fits all, perfect church, but there are small things we can all do to ensure that all who come feel welcome.

One of the keys is communication; if you have someone in your church with particular need, talk to them. It sounds obvious but doesn't always happen.

The posters are not exhaustive but hopefully will prompt thoughts and discussion.

You could display these in your church or hall, or use them as an audit for your PCC/vestry meeting to try and implement them in your church. If you have people in your congregations with some of these specific disabilities, make those ones a priority.

This resource was made by and in consultation with people with disabilities and neurodivergent people. It was born out of discussions at Disability Awareness Training between children and youth officers who have a passion for disability inclusion within the Church.

With the best will in the world, we are only human, we sometimes get things wrong, and we are all learning together.

If you'd like to learn more about our work, raise an issue, suggest an alteration or addition, or flag up something, please email enabling.all@lichfield.anglican.org and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

<https://lichfield.anglican.org/inclusion/enabling-all/>





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for those with

Dyslexia

Do....

Use images and diagrams to support text.

Align text to the left and keep consistent layout.

Consider producing materials in other formats
(for example audio or video).

Keep content short, clear and simple.

Use dyslexia-friendly fonts where possible (e.g.
Lexie Readable, Dyslexie, Comic Sans).

Print material on light coloured paper.

Don't....

Use large blocks of heavy text.

Underline words, use italics or write in capitals-
use bold instead.

Force users to remember things from previous
pages - give reminders and prompts.

Put too much information in one place.

Use text over a background image - keep
the background plain.



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Hearing impaired and/or D/deaf

Do....

Speak clearly, not loudly.

Ensure your face and mouth can be clearly seen when speaking.

Look at people directly and speak normally.

Provide ISL/BSL interpretation if asked for it.

Use closed captioning and subtitles for videos/social media.

Don't....

Shout or exaggerate speech.

Speak when in the dark or shadows.

Assume all hearing impaired people use sign language or can lip read.

Discard the use of microphones if you think people can hear you - microphones are often needed for the hearing loop to work properly.



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for those who are

Visually impaired
Or **Blind**

Do...

Stand in good light.

Speak clearly but not over loudly.

Offer visually impaired people large print/braille literature and signs.

Make sure that the floor or ground is as smooth as possible and there are no obstacles in the way.

Ensure that any steps or stairs have been marked with high-vis paint or tape so they can be clearly seen.

Don't....

Push a person - let them take your arm.

Rely on people being able to read to learn information.

Post pictures without image descriptions.

Link to pages on website by saying "click here"
- instead make the hyperlink the name of the page.



ENABLING ALL

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for those with

Autism, Neurodiversity,
& Cognitive Disorders

Do....

Keep services and meetings as short as possible.

Create a relaxed environment where people can make noise and move around if needed.

Reduce any intense sensory triggers
e.g. fluorescent lights, strong smells, loud noises.

Create a quiet space for people who might get overwhelmed.

Make it clear when people should sit and stand etc
- don't expect everyone to know automatically.

Use plain, not childish language with people with learning difficulties.

Don't....

Rely too much on words and text - use images as well.

Force anyone to handshake, hug, or touch.

Be offended if people don't make eye contact.

Hurry a speech impaired person-be relaxed and positive.

Finish people's sentences.



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for those who are
and / or have

Wheelchair Users Mobility Difficulties

Do....

Reserve your own accessible parking bays.

Sit down and converse at eye level with someone in a wheelchair.

Reserve seats with arm rests by the entrance for people who can't walk far.

Politely ask people to sit down if they block a wheelchair user's view.

Make sure the floor is as smooth as possible and there is plenty of room to get a wheelchair through.

Don't....

Don't lean on a wheelchair or move it unless the user asks you.

Rush someone with mobility problems.

Assume everyone can stand during songs/readings.

Leave heavy doors unattended if a wheelchair/crutch/cane user needs to get through.



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for those with

Anxiety and Mental Illness

Do....

Make sure the main entrance, exit and toilets are signposted so that people don't have to ask where they are.

Create an environment where people feel comfortable to get up and move around if they need to.

Keep sensory input to a minimum e.g. loud noises, bright lights.

Make adjustments if people ask for them (e.g. turning music down).

Be aware of the signs of a panic attack and how you could help.

Don't....

Make people feel embarrassed by any behaviour that seems abnormal to you.

Draw attention to someone who appears to be in distress.

Call on people without them knowing as they may feel uncomfortable.

Be offended if someone leaves suddenly or refuses help.



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Dementia

Do....

Have signage on both sides of the door (e.g. a sign to the toilet and another in the toilet saying 'this way to main church building').

Use signs with images as well as text.

Keep sensory triggers to a minimum e.g. bright lights, loud noises, strong smells.

Provide lighting that minimises big shadows.

Arrange transport for a person with dementia if necessary.

Encourage the befriending of a person with dementia with a buddy system if necessary.

Don't....

Use dark coloured door mats if you have a light coloured floor-they can seem like a hole in the floor to someone with dementia.

Embarrass people if they make a mistake or say something that sounds silly.

Become impatient with a person if they repeat something more than once.



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Asthma and Allergies

Do....

Take Allergies seriously.

Remove triggers, especially airborne triggers e.g. flowers, incense, nuts, gluten.

Make it clear if there are any allergens in foods/drinks you are providing.

Provide allergen-free alternatives if possible and keep them separate.

Make sure your first aider knows how to use an epi-pen.

Know the signs of an asthma attack/allergic reaction, how to help and when to call emergency services.

Don't....

Dismiss someone's allergies as "not serious".

Prioritise traditions over someone's health and accessibility.

Demand someone participate in a physical task.



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Chronic Pain/ Chronic Illness

Do....

Provide plenty of seating, especially seating with cushions/padding.

Make it clear that people can remain seated or move around if they need to.

Make sure your building is warm but not too hot -around 22c is optimal.

Don't....

Expect everyone to be able to do what seems to you a simple task.

Dismiss people's experiences because their condition is invisible.

Force people to move around more than necessary.

A Welcoming Church for All

General Tips on What to Do

Speak directly to the person - don't use a go-between.

Offer to help, but don't be offended by refusal, and don't help without asking.

Some people with hidden disabilities may need assistance.

Use positive terms e.g. 'disabled people' not 'the disabled'.

Ensure people know where the toilets are and don't have to ask.

Give eye contact, whether or not returned, but don't stare.

Be patient - some people take longer to respond than others.

Enable disabled people to sit where and with whom they wish.

Give help discreetly, don't make the person feel conspicuous.

Introduce yourself clearly by name when meeting someone new.

Talk to your Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) about changes you want to make to the building.

Only pray for healing if you are asked - some people don't want that kind of prayer.

