

# Disability and Accessibility

Practical ways to make your venue  
more inclusive and accessible



*The Church of England in Birmingham is committed to providing an environment that will promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.*

People think of disability as being wheelchair users, after all, that's the international symbol for disability. But a person's disability can present itself in many different ways. Some are external and use scooters, frames and walking sticks; others are more hidden; including hearing and sight problems, Dementia, heart conditions, mental health issues and many others.

We want to make sure that everyone is considered. Small changes can make a big difference in creating a space that is more accessible and welcoming for all.



## The 'All Inclusive, All Accessible' Golden Standard

The 'All Inclusive, All Accessible' badge recognises churches that have taken steps to consider the dignity of all people and put into action small changes to allow people with disabilities to feel welcome.

The inclusion & access Golden Standard enables a church or venue to answer 'yes' to following:

- Can I get into the building independently?
- Is there space for me to sit?
- Can I hear everything?
- Can I see everything?
- Can I get to the toilet independently?

So far, 12% of CofE churches in Birmingham achieve this.

In this leaflet are practical, simple ways for more churches to attain the Golden Standard of the 'All Inclusion, All Accessible' badge. **A church can cover 90% of disability needs with a budget of about £600.**





**of the people in the UK have a disability**

This is why accessibility is so important



**3 million**  
people with  
hearing impairments



**1.2 million**  
wheelchair  
users in the UK



**2 million**  
people with  
visual impairments



**1 million**  
autistic  
individuals in the UK



**10 million**  
people with  
arthritis



**850,000**  
people in the UK have  
dementia



**Over a million**  
people with  
learning disabilities

## Mobility access

- Repair footpaths and driveways, and clear leaves and rubbish
- Try to create level access to your church, or provide a ramp, signpost it clearly
- Ensure there is good, clear access to get around inside the building
- If you have a disabled entrance or designated disabled car parking, signpost it clearly
- Designate a space for wheelchairs / mobility scooters which is accessible, has clear sight-lines, is draft free and has good lighting. Consider using a mat to allocate this space (£135)
- Be aware of where the nearest accessible disabled toilet is, even if it's not in your church building
- Have wheelchairs available



## Hearing access

- Make available a portable hearing loop (£100 - £250 for a small church)
- Always use a microphone (Regularly check the batteries for radio microphones)
- Always check volume levels and microphones before the service starts
- Make sure people can see your lips clearly when you talk
- Talk to people with hearing impairments in a quieter place
- Learn some simple, welcoming, sign language (BSL)



St David, Shenley Green



St Francis, Bournville



St Edmund's, Tyseley



St Edmund's, Tyseley

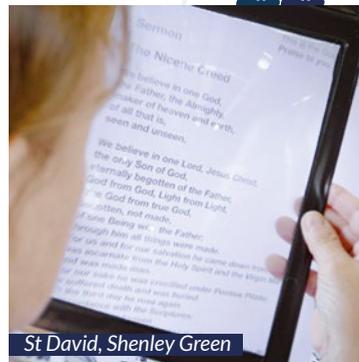
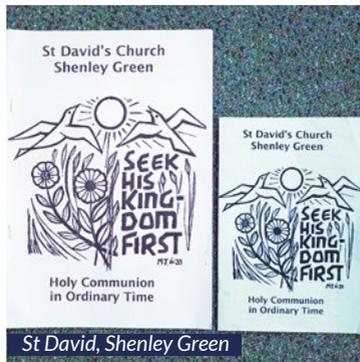
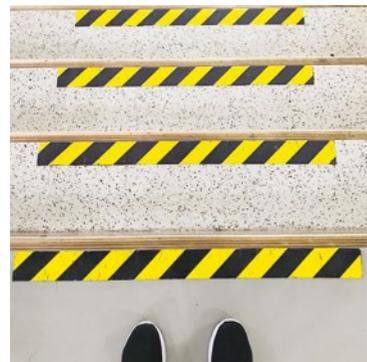


St David, Shenley Green



## Visual access

- Provide notice sheets, service sheets in larger sizes (A3)
- Offer the loan of magnifying readers (£2.50)
- Have available large print hymn books (£20) and Bibles (£15)
- Set up extra screens if there are columns or building obstructions in the way of the main view
- Reserve seating at the front for people with visual impairments
- Safety hazard tape on steps and edges
- Remove trip hazards, make sure walkways are kept clear
- Provide a bowl of water and space, for guide dogs
- Try to avoid saying “as you can see”
- Choose colours of carpeting and floormats carefully. People with Dementia may see a black floormat as a big hole, or a blue carpet as a puddle of water



## Autism

- Include a clear plan of the building printed out on the noticeboard or on your website
- Designate a quiet corner or quiet room
- Be clear about what will happen in your services
- Buy some standard lamps that don't use fluorescent bulbs (£20) - Some autistic people find that fluorescent lighting looks like a strobe light
- Buy a set of noise-cancelling headphones (£30)
- Read the top tips for autism in the Welcoming Those with Autism guide for churches – [tinyurl.com/welcoming-autism](http://tinyurl.com/welcoming-autism)
- Create a sensory box with tactile toys and objects

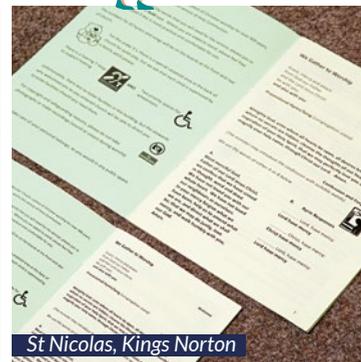


## Learning disabilities

- Those with learning disabilities will appreciate extra explanation and an easy read newsletter. Often local charities are pleased to help guide you on this
- Read this resource about church accessibility for people with learning difficulties: [tinyurl.com/resourcingmissionaccessibility](https://tinyurl.com/resourcingmissionaccessibility)
- Find more resources at [mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained](https://mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained)

## Functional/Reduced Literacy

- Be mindful of who you invite to read at services, to avoid causing embarrassment
- Read out instructions rather than assume everyone can read them
- Print service sheets on off-white paper
- Use simple language and explain things clearly
- Make use of visual clues and imagery



St Thomas', Garretts Green



St David, Shenley Green



St Nicolas, Kings Norton

## Other welcome help

- Position staff/volunteers on the door to welcome people into the building. Train them to look out for people who might need assistance. Point them out at the start of service, so people know who to ask for help
- Provide chairs with arms for easy standing
- Offer gluten free and non alcoholic alternatives for communion
- Create a safe space for babies and young children with toys and books
- Include a changing table in the restroom area
- Consider having a box that includes wipes, gloves, towels, spare nappies and spare clothes in the preparation that any accidents can be cleaned discreetly
- Find tips on how churches can be more welcoming to people with dementia and how to support someone living with dementia at [tinyurl.com/cofe-dementia-tips](https://tinyurl.com/cofe-dementia-tips)

So much of what is in this leaflet is relevant to people who are affected by dementia because dementia can show itself in many ways depending on which part of the brain is affected

You can also read our **Dementia friendly Church** recourse at [tinyurl.com/cofe-dementia-church](https://tinyurl.com/cofe-dementia-church)



The Equality Act 2010 is a very fair law. If a place cannot afford to do something, it doesn't have to. If you take good expert advice, and plan carefully, you will know what is doable in your budget. Ask individuals what will help. Making any of these changes, big or small, is a step forward.

**For more information visit:**

**[www.cofebirmingham.com/hub/mission-learning/intercultural/disability](http://www.cofebirmingham.com/hub/mission-learning/intercultural/disability)**

**Or contact:**

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Bishop's Advisor on Dementia

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