



Inclusion and Accessibility Audit Tool

For use by Parishes and Groups

**For a word version of this document please contact:
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In recent years there has been a growing awareness that 'disability' means more than deaf, blind, learning disability or wheelchair users. Whilst the range of impairment as being associated with 'disability' has increased, so has the awareness in the public mind that the medical condition is only part of what actually disables a person. How society in general makes provision for those with impairment is also a factor on whether a person is able or disabled from engaging with society in as normal a way as possible.

The story of Jesus meeting the man at the pool of Bethesda speaks well of how the man was not just disabled by his physical condition, but also by the fact that he could not get to the healing waters. He was disabled because no-one had thought to make provision to give him access to the pool. It is worth reflecting on why Jesus healed this man and not the others who had friends to support them. (John 5:2-9).

The Church has always prided itself on being welcoming and friendly, yet, for many, churches can be difficult and even dangerous places. Even times of worship and fellowship can be uncomfortable and alienating if not accessible to the person with special needs.

In a special Mass for the sick and people living with disabilities as part of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, **Pope Francis** (12th. June 2016: www.vatican.va/content/homilies/2016/) raised the following points:

- *'Love and solidarity are what make the world a better place, not a focus on physical perfection and hiding away those who do not fit a commercial ideal'*
- *"The world does not become better because only apparently 'perfect' people live there, but when human solidarity, mutual acceptance and respect increase,"*
- *'Encountering and welcoming someone who is different can cause fear at first, but we are all different. There is no one exactly like another.'*
- *"Differences are a richness because I have something and you have something else and by putting the two together we have something more beautiful, something greater,"*
- *'Diversity is not something to fear, but is the path to improvement, to be more beautiful and richer.'*
- *'Discrimination, especially in a parish, is something very ugly,'*
- *"It is true that if you want to receive Communion, you must have had preparation. And if you do not understand the language (of the catechesis), for example if you are deaf, you must have the possibility of a preparation with sign language,"*
- *'A priest who says his parish cannot provide special religious education classes must convert,'*
- *"Think of a priest who does not welcome everyone. What advice would the Pope give him?" "Close the doors of the church! Either everyone or no one" should enter.*
- *"We all have the same possibility of growing, moving forward, loving the Lord, doing good things".*

Our Bishops said: *"The Church strives to accommodate all people in its life and mission. We must seek to include people with disabilities in the pastoral, spiritual, liturgical, social and educational dimensions of Church life. Our Catholic organisations must be aware of this and make appropriate adjustments to include people with disabilities..... Our attitudes, understanding and awareness of these issues must also be challenged, developed and improved. We*

will all benefit from making it possible for those with disabilities to live their wide variety of talents and experiences in the service of the Church." **Diversity and Equality Guidelines approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2005)**

The following selection of questions is designed to assist you in engaging with inclusion and access issues regarding those termed 'living with disabilities within your community'. The first part of this tool covers **People** issues and the second the **Environment**.

It is suggested that a small group (2-3) take time to complete this audit and record what they find. A separate audit needs to be undertaken for each church covered by your parish.

The completed audit(s) will need to be reflected on, by for example the Parish Council, in a prayerful way and sharing the findings with people living with a range of disabilities. The outcome of this deliberation will need to progress to realistic action plan including what it can be reasonable to change in the short, medium and long term. In your deliberations please also consider the issue of inclusion in regards to the housebound in your community.

Please remember that this audit tool has not been designed specifically for your particular building(s) and some questions might seem strange to your setting but will be important to another.

It may be helpful if the completed action plan on page 11 is emailed to the Caritas Leeds Co-ordinator joseph.cortis@dioceseofleeds.org.uk so that we have a clear picture on what actions are being taken across our diocese.

Thank you.

Rev. Dr. Joseph D Cortis, Coordinator for Caritas Leeds

Name of Parish:	Parish contact person:
Name of the Church premises being audited:	
Name of person / persons completing the audit:	

People

Our Commitment to the Inclusion of Persons Living with Disabilities	Yes	Partly	No	Action Needed
We have a commitment to be intentional in our welcome and inclusion of people living with disabilities				
We hold disability awareness events to provide training, advice and support for those involved in the ministry to people who live with a disability				
We invite people living with disabilities to help us assess our buildings and ministries for barriers to participation				
We encourage persons living with disabilities to share their gifts and skills through the various ministries of our church community and support their involvement in these ministries				
We ensure that persons living with Disabilities are encouraged to play an active part within the mass and other services such as:				
Welcomers				
Readers				
Altar servers				
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist				
Music				
Refreshments				

Welcoming	Yes	Partly	No	Action Needed
Do staff and volunteers introduce themselves to welcome and speak to people who are on their own, or who appear different from others in some way?				
Do your church or parish centre / hall have a buddy system to assist people with disabilities?				
Are new parishioners/visitors shown around the building? This includes showing them where the toilets are and informing them of emergency procedures.				
Are new parishioners/visitors informed of programmes/what's on in the church or parish centre / hall?				
Do you use a Website/Facebook or Twitter to promote your work?				
Do your parish / parish hall have a clear code of conduct or ground rules that are visible?				
Have you approached the topic of disability awareness or equal opportunities with your parish?				
Are people who are blind or partially sighted asked what their preferred format for written information is? Braille, large print, audio and email. Allow time for information to be produced in these formats.				
Promoting the mission of the church to the Public	Yes	Partly	No	Action needed
Is written information accessible to those who are blind or partially sighted				
Is there a budget for adapting materials (large print, plain fonts with text and background contrast, audio or Braille)?				
Is written information in easy to read format (basic English with no jargon)?				
Do promotional materials promote and inform the public of the accessibility of your parish?				
Is this done through Email, Facebook or Twitter?				
Do you network with other services including the disability sector, to ensure people with disabilities are aware of your parish facilities?				
Does your website meet disability standards, i.e. is compatible with screen reading and magnification software? RNIB can assist you with the testing of your website, contact: www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer/business-services for more information.				

Communicating				
Does your community know how to communicate with anyone who lives with a disability?				
Do you provide audio adaptation for those hard of hearing?				
The Parish				
Are people living with a disability involved in decision making, such as having an input on how the service is run, being involved in informal consultations and parish meetings?				
Are staff and volunteers trained in basic disability awareness?				
Would your parish consider appointing /employing an inclusion person similar to other roles such as safeguarding, health and safety etc.?				

Partnerships and Networks	Yes	Partly	No	Action needed
Do you have a referral list of disability services for people and their families?				
Does your parish work in partnership with disability services to make your service accessible?				
Do you provide information about your service to disability services?				
Liturgy				
Are welcomers instructed regarding appropriate ways in which to interact with and anticipate the needs of individuals/families living with a variety of disabilities?				
Are liturgies and catechesis positive in the portrayal of persons living with disabilities and of their contributions, not just their needs?				
Are scripture accounts related to miraculous healings taught and preached with sensitivities?				
Are members of the clergy sensitive to adapting the administration of the sacraments to persons living with disabilities?				
Are individuals consulted as to what will be best for their situation rather than assumptions made on their behalf				

When planning liturgies do you make every effort to consider how to make the activity inclusive of our friends living with disabilities and extend reasonable adjustments for them to be active participants				
Are the liturgies accessible to all? i.e.				
- Wheelchair users				
- People with limited mobility				
- People who live with a sensory impairment				
- People who live with Autism				
- People who have Mental Health issues				
- People with memory challenges				
- People who have a Learning Disability				
Bulletins / Leaflets				
Are catechetical programmes designed with all levels of ability in mind?				
Are people who live with disabilities involved in designing programmes?				
Can everyone join in with the different activities and sessions on an equal basis?				
Do staff know how to adapt, convert, change and communicate activities in order to include people with disabilities?				
If a person has a language difficulty do you keep descriptions to four instructions only?				

Environment

Transport	Yes	Partly	No	Action Needed
Do you have transport arrangements for people who have difficulty getting to Mass and other liturgies?				
Is there a clear plan for the coordination of transport to those in need of a lift				
Car Parking				
Is the car park – surface even (no dips, gullies), well-lit and safe?				

Are there designated accessibility car parking spaces located close to the entrance of the Church/Hall and are they kept free? (parking spaces must be large enough to accommodate an individual who uses a wheelchair, getting in and out of the car and also accessing the rear of the car). Is there a dropped kerb?				
Signage				
Picture based, not just words. <i>Text to be San Serif and not ornate which is harder to read. Not text all in caps again this is hard to read. If such signage is historic and considered part of the design, consider providing additional plain text signage / information. Guidance is available in BS8300-2:2018 and the Sign Design Guide.</i>				
Entrance Reception and Welcome				
Is there someone to greet people when they arrive?				
Do you feel the entrance to your building is welcoming?				
Is the entrance well-lit and can the inside foyer or reception area be seen from the outside, i.e. visibility panels on the door for all to use?				
Is the entrance clear from obstructions?				
Does the main entrance of the building have level access?				
Is the main entrance/accessibility entrance obvious or clearly signposted?				
Are any buzzers large and well lit and can they be reached by a wheelchair user?				
Can door handles be reached by a wheelchair user and are they contrasted?				
Have you considered the use of electronic operated doors?				
Is there a flashing light for anyone who is deaf? <i>if there is an intercom include audio and visual to help who cannot speak and are deaf. Red Light for Danger; White for access</i>				
Church / Hall				

Are stairs well lit?				
Are background noises kept to a minimum (where possible)? If cooking in the kitchen can activities be adapted?				
Does your new parishioners forms allow for special needs to be identified?				
Moving Around the Venue	Yes	Partly	No	Action Needed
Do wheelchair users have access to all parts of the church or parish hall?				
Are floor surfaces even and slip resistant? (carpeted floor can also be difficult to push for some wheelchair users)				
Do doors have kick plates?				
Do doors open long enough to get through slowly or are the closers too fast and strong?				
Are all doors wide enough for a wheelchair user to use easily? This is normally 33 inches (750 mm).				
If not, do you know which ones are and are not?				
If people can get into the church or parish hall and move around can they also get out of the building in the event of an emergency?				
If not is there a place of refuge in the building?				
Are doors light enough for a wheelchair user to open and are there high doorway lips?				
If your building has more than one floor is there a working lift available?				
Are lifts wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, with reachable buttons?				
Are floors free of obstacles? (remember to take into account those who have poor sight).				
Are fixtures such as door handles, brochures and promotional material at the right height to be reached by a wheelchair user, (i.e. 900mm – 1000mm)				
Do you have fluorescent strips for doors, handles and stairs to aid those with poor peripheral vision?				

Toilet Facilities				
Are the toilets well signed (brightly coloured signs in large font for individuals who have poor sight)?				
Are there designated wheelchair accessible toilets?				
Do the doors of the accessible toilets open outwards rather than inwards?				
Are there grab rails on both sides of the wall in the accessible toilets?				
Is there sufficient room for a wheelchair user to position their wheelchair beside the WC and manoeuvre his/her self from the wheelchair to the WC (minimum size is 1500mm x 2000mm with doors opening out)?				
Do the general toilets have grab rails for the use of people who are ambulant disabled? In the case of males are the urinals accessible?				
Are the taps easy to turn on/off (bear in mind wheelchair users and those who have dexterity issues)?				
Are sinks reachable and have free space beneath them?				
Are hand paper dispensers or hand dryers reachable to wheelchair users?				
Are hand and toilet paper dispensers single sheet dispensers rather than from a roll (a single sheet dispenser is easier to use as it only requires the use of one hand)?				
Are there sealed bins in the toilets?				
Is the emergency cord hanging to the floor not tied in a knot?				
Do you have a changing facility or a portable changing mat?				
Is the building accessible to all? i.e.				
- Wheelchair users				
- People with limited Mobility				
- People who live with a sensory impairment				
- People who live with Autism				
- People who have Mental Health issues				
- People with memory challenges				

Action Plan for Inclusion and Accessibility

Completing this will help summarise the gaps in your provision document the action needed

Name of Parish or Church: _____

Name of Deanery: _____

Person finalizing this agreed Action Plan: _____

Issue to be addressed and how it will be actioned	Who is Responsible?	Target Date	Review Date	What has been achieved?

For supportive materials please access this site: Through the Roof: www.throughtheroof.org/supportingyou/churchresources/

Please submit this section to joseph.cortis@dioceseofleeds.org.uk or post to Caritas Leeds St Monica House c/o Hinsley Hall 62, Headingley Lane Leeds LS2 2BX.