



It is an essential part of the mission of God's church and people that we are able to welcome as fully as possible all people into our church life, its worship and activities. As local churches we should seek to have an open door to allow ease of access and inclusion to everyone, whatever their disabling condition. Furthermore as an essential part of our welcome we should be able to offer disabled people a clear sense of inclusion with the people of God. They should be able to participate in worship, fellowship and activities of the church community without having to be treated in a special way.

[Quite apart from the mission and moral imperative, the removal of barriers to inclusion is expected of all institutions under the terms of the Equality Act 2010.]

The term 'disability' covers a wide range of impairments, physical, sensory and mental in nature. Although barriers to inclusion frequently occur because of disabling conditions, they are more often caused by the situation rather than by the disability itself. It is important, therefore, that each church community looks at its accessibility and inclusion for disabled people, becomes aware of barriers, and seeks ways to address these.

The Diocesan Disability Task Group can help you do this in the most effective way for your circumstances.

It is recommended that each PCC make a start by producing and implementing an Action Plan, such as the one outlined here.

1. Create a Team to lead the project.
2. Carry out an audit of the accessibility of church premises and wider church life using the Basic Access Questionnaire attached.

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3. Review the findings and decide on action points which can/will be carried out
4. Adopt a Policy Statement to reflect the 'Open Door' ideal. *(see p 12)*
5. Review progress and access needs on an annual basis.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Diocesan Disability Task Group (access details on the Diocesan website) if we can help in any way. And please let us know if you discover any ways we can improve or amend this tool for it to be more useful to other churches.

THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE



BASIC ACCESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Church:

Date:

PART 1: General

			Y / N	<i>Please note details here or on a separate sheet</i>
Transport	1.1	Are there clear procedures in place to coordinate transport to enable mobility / visually / hearing / learning impaired people to attend any and all church activities?		
	1.2	Who is the named person responsible for the coordination?		
	1.3	Can people with mobility / visual / hearing / learning impairment park or be dropped off within 50 metres of the building entrance?		Please indicate how the parking or dropping off point is indicated.
Services and facilities	1.4	Are sidespersons or other designated people available to assist unaccompanied mobility / visually / hearing / learning impaired people as required?		
	1.5	Have these people received some basic guidance on the principles to follow in these circumstances?		



		Is there an effective evacuation strategy for the church?		
	1.7	Are all exit, toilet and fire signs pictorial?		
Information	1.8	Do you provide information available in advance about access to your facilities?		
Training	1.9	Have church leaders and PCC members received basic training in meeting the practical and pastoral needs of mobility / visually / hearing / learning impaired people and wheelchair users?		Please give details of the training provided

PART 2: Mobility Impairment



			Y / N / N/A	Please note details here or on a separate sheet
Services / Meetings	2.1	Are there printed copies of any information used on PowerPoint or overhead projectors available for people who have difficulty standing?		
	2.2	If there are, how do visitors know of their availability?		
Buildings: External Access	2.3	Is there level access or a dropped kerb to enable easy access for wheelchair users from the road to the church grounds?		
	2.4	Is there a level approach or a ramp from the entrance to the church grounds to the main entrance?		
	2.5	If the approach is ramped, does the ramp have a handrail on both sides?		
	2.6	Is the surface smooth, slip resistant and adequately lit?		
	2.7	Is there an external door with a threshold less than 13mm high?		
	2.8	Have contrasting features been added to fully glass doors to ensure that the glass is visible?		
	2.9	If so, how has this been done?		
	2.10	Can wheelchair users see and be seen through glass safety panels in solid external doors?		

	.1	Do vision panels fitted to entrance and lobby doors have a minimum zone of visibility between 500mm and 1500mm from the floor, and does the glass meet safety requirements?	
Buildings: Internal Access*	2.12	Can wheelchair users see and be seen through glass safety panels in solid internal doors?	
	2.13	Are handrails fitted alongside all internal steps and stairs which mobility impairs people might use? (It is acceptable for single steps to be without handrails.)	
	2.14	Are corridors and aisles wide enough and clear of obstructions that would impede a person with limited mobility?	
	2.15	Is there seating reserved next to suitable wheelchair spaces for people accompanying wheelchair users?	
	2.16	Do floor services allow ease of movement for wheelchair users?	
	2.17	Is there a wheelchair accessible toilet?	
	2.18	Does the accessible toilet meet current standards?	
	2.19	Is a properly maintained wheelchair available for use by mobility impaired people?	
	2.20	Are seats with arms available for people with walking difficulties?	

	2.21	Are door handles and latches easy to use by people in wheelchairs?		
	2.22	Is there level access to the communion rail or place of distribution?		

*** For detailed advice and information, please see *“Widening the Eye of the Needle: Access to Church Buildings for People with Disabilities”* by John H Penton (Church House Publishing) – widely available.**

PART 3: Visual Impairment

			Y / N / N/A	<i>Please note details here or on a separate sheet</i>
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Services / Meetings	1	Are large print (minimum 16 point sans serif font, e.g. Arial) hymn books or sheets available?		
	3.2	Are large print copies of any songs or text to be used on OHP or projector available? (minimum 16 point sans serif font, e.g. Arial)		
	3.3	Are large-print service and notice sheets available? (minimum 16 point sans serif font, e.g. Arial)		
	3.4	How do visitors know of the availability of the above large print items?		
	3.5	Is there an 'audio' version of information about the church available?		
	3.6	Can you access Braille copies of printed materials if needed?		
	3.7	Do you have tactile aids in the church to help people with visual impairments?		
Buildings: External	3.8	Are the sizes of steps and risers of external steps consistent?		
	3.9	Do all external steps have handrails on both sides? (It is acceptable for single steps to be without handrails.)		
Buildings: Internal	3.10	Do all steps and stairs have colour-contrast marking on the edge?		Specify surface and edge colours
	3.11	Are all the handrails a contrasting colour to the surrounding walls?		Specify rail and wall colours
	3.12	Are all the toilet, exit and fire signs in pictorial form?		

	3.13	Are all corridors free from obstructions that would affect visually impaired people?		
	3.14	Are all fully glass doors clearly marked to ensure visibility to children and visually impaired people?		
	3.15	If they are marked, how has this been done?		
	3.16	Are there any suitable places and facilities, such as a drinking bowl for guide dog?		
	3.17	Is there good quality diffused lighting throughout the building?		
	3.18	Is there colour or other contrast to identify doors and door furniture?		

PART 4: Hearing Impairment

			Y / N / N/A	<i>Please note details here or on a separate sheet</i>
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Services and facilities	1	Is there reserved seating at the front of the church/hall for lip-readers or sign language users?		
	4.2	Is there an agreed suitable location for BSL signers?		
Buildings	4.3	Is there a basic sound reinforcement system installed?		
	4.4	If 'yes', how often is it checked and serviced?		
	4.5	Is there a permanent or temporary Induction Loop covering at least the seating areas?		
	4.6	If 'yes', how often is it checked?		
	4.7	Would visitors know that a Sound System and Loop are available?		
	4.8	Is the face of the person speaking both visible and well lit?		
	4.9	Do you have BSL signers or lip-speakers available in your church?		

PART 5: Learning Disability

			Y / N / N/A	Please note details here sheet
Services and facilities	5.1	Are people with learning disabilities welcomed and included?		
	5.2	Are there procedures in place to support the families with people with learning disabilities in church services?		
	5.3	Is there support for children with learning disabilities within the children's group?		
	5.4	Does your church have regular meetings for people with learning disabilities?		
	5.5	Do you use Makaton signing in your church?		
	5.6	Is there anyone in your church who can use Makaton?		

Note

The article, *“Opening the Doors: Ministry to those with Learning Difficulties and people on the autistic spectrum”*, available on the Newcastle Diocesan website, is a good source of advice and information.



			Y / N / N/A	<i>Please note details here or on a separate sheet</i>
Having completed the Basic Access Questionnaire	6.1	Has the PCC adopted an 'Open Door' Policy? <i>(either the Model Policy Statement set out below, or your own version of it)</i>		
	6.2	Has the PCC formulated an Action Plan for the implementation of the Policy?		

The Model 'Open Door' Policy Statement

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of

 welcomes and supports the principles of 'The Open Door' designed to enable people with disabilities and older people to worship God in fellowship with other members of their community.

We are committed to a programme of improvements to make our activities, events and facilities more accessible to all people regardless of their disabling condition. We will develop and monitor our wider church programme of activities to endeavour to ensure that accessible venues are

always available for meetings held away from our own premises.

We will ensure that all paid staff and volunteers are given training on disability issues to enable all who come to join us to be fully included as a natural and normal part of our ministry.

The person leading this project is

 who will be pleased to receive comments and suggestions for improvements to this aspect of our church's life.

(Dated)