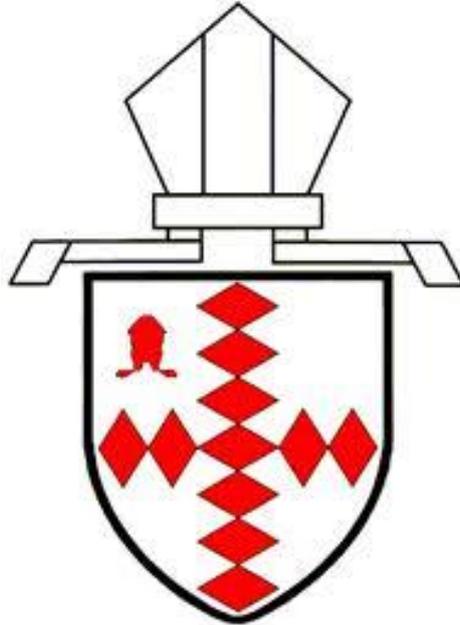


'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10)

***'In Christ, there is no difference between Jew and Greek.
There is no difference between male and female.
You are all the same in Christ Jesus.'
(Gal 3:28)***



Southwark Diocese Disability Inclusion Policy 2013



The Church of England serving the people of
South London and East Surrey

Disability Inclusion Policy

As children of God, we have a new dignity and God calls us to fullness of life.
(Introduction to the Common Worship Rite of Baptism 2006)

Mission statement.

We are made in the image of God, and as such all people are of equal importance and significance. In God there is no distinction between male and female, Greek or Jew, bond or free – disabled or able. We all, irrespective of our status have privileges and responsibilities in the practice and outworking of our faith. Just as there is a ‘bias to the poor’ so there is a Biblical imperative to have a corporate responsibility to those on the margins of society and within the structures of our church.

This policy enshrines the principle that all people employed or accessing services offered by the Diocese of Southwark are treated equally.

Introduction

We are required in law to respond to the subject of disability and this has a bearing on our diocese as a service provider and employer. As such the Equality Act (2010) states that the diocese must take reasonable steps to ensure that our policies, practices and procedures enable people with disabilities (lay and ordained) to enjoy and fully participate in all aspects of Diocesan life and work.

This will affect the organisation at all levels of meetings and events from PCC to Diocesan Synod and Cathedral in terms of choice of venue, access, large print copies of printed texts, loop systems for hearing aid users etc. It will affect parishes in terms of their obligation to carry out and implement an access audit. In law these things are not voluntary concessions to the disabled. They are necessary obligations laid on us in terms of the theological and legal imperatives of the Act. The Law requires both employers and service providers to make such provision.

Definition of disability

'A person suffers a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out day to day activities'

(Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part 1)

Physical or mental impairments include sensory impairments (such as those affecting sight and hearing) and learning difficulties. The definition also covers certain medical conditions when they have a long term and substantial effect on people's everyday lives and mobility.

How the Equality Act affects 'service-providers' and Employers.

The Equality Act states that service providers and employees should take reasonable steps to ensure that their policies, practices and procedures enable people with disabilities to make full use of anything they offer to the public, or to work comfortably within the environment. If your practice makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a person with disabilities to work, or to use your services, you may be in breach of the Act unless you take steps to change. These are known as 'reasonable adjustments'.

If your premises have physical features – including acoustics – that make it difficult for people with a hearing impairment or people with disabilities to work, or to use your service, you should take steps to remove or alter those features. If an auxiliary aid or service would enable a person with disabilities to use your service, then you should take reasonable steps to provide it.

The Purpose of this policy

To consider the theological imperative of this issue for the Diocese of Southwark.

To consider the legal and legislative imperatives of the 2010 Equality Act.

To inform and support the church at all levels in the diocese in its structures in inclusive 'good practice in all areas of its organisation, life, work and strategy.

To be aware of the necessity of the diocese to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act, its obligations to its employees and as a 'service provider'.

Strategies to achieve the purpose of this policy

To support the diocese to be a catalyst for changing lives by changing attitudes towards disability access and inclusion through its policies and practice.

To support informed advocacy of inclusive attitudes when speaking in public situations, and in written communications.

To support the diocese in its awareness as an employer and as a service provider to create accessibility for all. By this awareness we may, as a diocese, structurally and strategically respond to the theological and legal imperatives relating to this issue.

To support good practice for parochial churches, and the diocese as an institution in their role as providers for visitors, tourists, worshippers and pilgrims, in these places of cultural and religious heritage.

To support good practice for the church as an employer of both paid and voluntary workers, as required, in law.

Implementation

To ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities we will develop the following good practice in areas covered by this policy:

Good practice for the Church as a service provider.

- A positive attitude to include all people as equals and so enable their full and equal participation, where possible, in both sharing in and leading worship is at the heart of the Gospel.
- Where possible all should be able to access the building independently.
- Where possible there should be accessible seating, with varying seat height, some with arms.
- Where possible there should be free movement around the building for someone to independently use a wheelchair or other aids to assist their movement.
- Where possible steps and obstructions should be removed. Full participation in all aspects of worship is central to the experience of the worshipper.
- Gathering for Communion at the altar is the heart of Christian worship. Therefore where possible the altar should be fully accessible for communion in the way it is for the able bodied.
- Singing in the choir, serving, chalice assistants, reading lessons, leading intercessions, are all part of worship and where appropriate should be accessible to all.
- A loop system should be available and used at all times.
- Large print service books and hymn books should be available at all times.
- PCC meetings and all committee meetings should be held in accessible locations.
- All church activities, socials, prayer groups, bible studies and courses should be held in fully accessible locations.

- All material for meetings should be available in large print.
- All church buildings including halls require a current access audit which should be reviewed and implemented annually.
- The Diocese has its own guide, ‘An Access Appraisal of Church Buildings - *a guide to making a basic assessment of the accessibility of churches, halls, and other premises*’ that is available on the Southwark diocesan website.
- In house Access audit packs for churches are also available from CHAD and “Through the roof”
- A formal audit of all property can be requested from the appropriate person working for the local government area in which you worship.

Good practice for the Church as an employer in terms of its responsibilities under the Equality Act.

Follow best practice for equal opportunities employment – statutory obligations.

Clear written equal opportunities policy with access issues incorporated.

Equality Act access to work requirements apply to all posts – lay & ordained, paid and voluntary. Voluntary work attracts the same rights as others in a paid capacity. It therefore applies to everyone – i.e. from those working in parishes in a voluntary capacity through to employees of the diocese who work in Trinity House.

Key aspects to consider

Job advertisements and applications procedures.

Application forms in a clear and simple format available in large print and online. Advertisements in a clear legible format – available in large print and audiotape upon request.

Diocesan website should comply with 'best practice' standards for access of information.

Standardised interview procedure should include:

- Choice of accessible venue with designated disabled parking and toilet facilities.
- Loop system should be available. BSL interpreter services available upon request from the Chaplain to the Deaf.
- Appropriate provision on request to meet the needs of visually impaired candidates.
- Appropriate provision to cover the needs of any other candidates with specific needs.

Appointments - Lay and Ordained:

- Full accessibility, where possible, of all working environments.
- Provision for access needs for visually impaired, hearing impaired candidates and those who have other disability issues.
- Where possible, full access in churches to the altar, vestry and meeting rooms.
- Where possible, full access of all buildings relating to the post, eg Church halls and offices.
- Full access to the vicarage/rectory where appropriate. All new vicarages should be built to disability standards. Existing vicarages should be upgraded on a rolling programme. If a vicarage cannot meet disabled standards it should be replaced in time.

- Provision of appropriate office furniture and equipment including any specialist equipment required. (Access to work grants are available).
- Further information www.employers-forum.co.uk

Conditions of Service:

- All local and diocesan synods should where possible be held in accessible locations with disabled parking, toilets, appropriate seating, loop facility and large print text available.
- It is understood that the issue of the provision of disabled parking is challenging in central London. Because blue badge holders cannot park on yellow lines in central London boroughs it may be worth contacting the local council for maps that show the location of designated blue badge parking spaces.
- Local 'chapters' should be held in accessible locations.
- All diocesan training events (clergy and lay) within the diocese should be held in accessible locations.
- All diocesan boards and committees require accessible locations for the disabled.
- All diocesan services and events require accessible locations and provision.
- Provision for BSL interpreter should be made available on request.
- Provision for assistance dogs should be available on request.
- All management processes, (interviews, ministerial reviews, etc) should be held in accessible locations.

The Language we use.

It is important to use language that does not reinforce negative images, incorrect assumptions and stereotypes associated with people with disabilities. All language is constantly evolving and the simplest way to make sure you are using appropriate language is to ask people with disabilities themselves.

Language to be encouraged	Language to be avoided
People with disabilities	The disabled, invalid
Those with visual or hearing impairments	The blind, the partially sighted, the deaf
A person with arthritis, with epilepsy.	An arthritic, an epileptic
Someone who has...	A victim of, suffers from, crippled/afflicted by
A person with physical disabilities	Cripple, handicapped
Someone with learning disabilities	Retarded, mentally handicapped
A person with cerebral palsy	Spastic/Spaz
Profoundly deaf	Deaf and dumb
Hearing aid	Deaf aid
Specify the need	Special needs person (too vague to be useful)
A wheelchair user	Wheelchair-bound/dependant/confined
Accessible toilet	Disabled toilet (doesn't work?)

Good practice for Parochial & diocesan events. The Equality Act requirements for convening meetings, synods, training and special days in diocesan, deanery, and parish life.

The following should be included in all booking forms, training applications, CME notification of meetings, diocesan committees, invitations etc, so that the appropriate provision can be made for all people with disability needs.

“In order to enable you to enjoy full participation in this synod/meeting/ training/ service/committee, please indicate below if you require any of the following provision”.

Induction loop

BSL interpreter

Large print material

Space for an assistance dog

Wheelchair access and toilet facilities.

Disabled designated parking space

Special diet

Other requirements (please specify).

Please return this form to....

ACCESSIBILITY SYMBOLS

The symbols below may be used to promote or solicit needs of accessibility of places, programmes and other activities for persons with disabilities.



Indicates accessible facilities, paths, toilets and parking areas for people with limited mobility.



Indicates enhanced hearing devices or technology are provided.



Indicates sign language is provided.



Indicates print materials available in Braille upon request.



Signifies print in 18 point or larger.

Prayer for our Parishes

Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing on our churches.

May the doorways be wide enough to welcome all who need.

Your love and ours narrow enough to shut out evil and strife.

May the thresholds be smooth enough to present no stumbling blocks to children, nor barriers to those who are elderly and disabled.

May the doors be strong to turn back the tempter's power but open and inviting to those who are your guests.

May they be doorways to your eternal kingdom.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.