



Diocese of Hallam

Inclusion Policy: Disabled People. St Vincent's Church, Crookes, Sheffield

Introduction

The Diocese of Hallam is committed to full implementation of The Equality Act 2010. A person is disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have “a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect” on their ability to do normal daily activities. Every parish should ask, “what are the barriers which prevent disabled people from having full active involvement in our parish life?” We must then do all we can to remove those barriers, to enrich us all.

“...creating a completely accessible parish does not only mean eliminating physical barriers...It also assumes that we stop talking about 'them' and start talking about 'us.'” (1)

“The bonds of belonging become even stronger when disabled people are not simply passive receivers, but take an active part in the life of society as agents of change.” (2)

1. Our parish will have one or two representatives responsible for ensuring the full implementation of the Equality Act 2010, working towards a parish community which is fully inclusive of disabled people. *The legislation requires us to be “anticipatory” –thinking ahead, and about how the needs of our present congregation may develop in the future.*
2. Our parish will carry out an audit of its facilities and activities with a view to enhancing access and inclusion for disabled people. Where possible, the working group will include disabled people. (3)
3. Our parish is required by law to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make the liturgy and community life accessible to disabled people. *This may include alterations to physical features; provision of suitable spaces for people who use wheelchairs; clear marking of steps, and uneven surfaces; providing additional help; adapting existing parish services and catechetical programmes.* (4)
4. Our liturgies must be celebrated in such a way that disabled people are included as fully as possible. *This includes ensuring a good loop system is installed and turned on; provision of materials in accessible formats; use of signing when possible.*
5. Our forms of ministry will be open to disabled people. *E.g., enabling a person who uses a wheelchair to be a reader by providing a microphone; enabling disabled people to bring up the offertory gifts; to minister holy communion; to serve at the altar; to be a welcomer.*
6. Catechetical programmes, parish, social life, youth activities, and every other aspect of parish life, must be as fully inclusive as possible. The Diocese will promote training for catechists of disabled children/ adults.
7. Parish communications will routinely include reminders to plan for accessibility and inclusion of all, in local and national activities.
8. Our parish will request and promote the production of nationally published resources to include accessible formats, by the Diocese.

Notes

(1). Pope Francis' Prayer Intention December 2023

(2) Pope Francis' Address to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 11.04.2024, *Disability, and the human condition. Changing the social determinants of disabilities and building a new culture of inclusion.*

(3) *Inclusion and Accessibility Audit Tool* available

(4) 'Reasonable adjustments' will depend on all circumstances, including: how effective the change will be; how practical; the church's resources and size; resources already spent; cost and financial support available

*Our documents use the Social Model of Disability and identity-first language. References: [Social model of disability | Disability charity Scope UK](#), [British Deaf Association](#), [National Autistic Society](#), [RNIB](#)