

Diocese of London
Property Department, Care of Churches



PROVISION FOR THE DISABLED IN OUR CHURCHES
Access Audit Self-Assessment Form

Many church communities are concerned about how they can help make their buildings more accessible to disabled people. There is a statutory duty to do this under the terms of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act.¹ This does not mean that your church is automatically “illegal” if it does not, for example, have wheelchair access or a hearing loop. What it does mean is that you must make reasonable adjustments to make your building accessible to those with disabilities.

Before embarking on any specific disability access works to your church building it is important to undertake a thorough access audit. You can commission an access audit from an appropriately experienced professional. This is the best option in the long run. However, in the short term it might be found useful to undertake your own audit using the DIY form that follows. An access audit will help you to distribute your resources in the most efficient and effective way.

The term “disability” refers to a wide range of conditions, including deafness and blindness as well as mobility difficulties. Where possible, you should consider your building in terms of all disabilities, not just

¹ The text of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 can be found on the www.opsi.gov.uk website

those represented in your current congregation. For example, it is likely that there will be disabled members in congregations at weddings and funerals.

Where reasonably possible facilities should be shared between disabled and non-disabled alike; common entrances and car parks should be used, and where specialist facilities are required, such as WCs, they should be grouped together and not out on a limb.

Disability discrimination is not about treating the disabled specially, quite the opposite in fact. It is about enabling them to join in with the activities of the rest of the church community without having to be treated in a special way.

The Church of England is fortunate in having a vast treasury of splendid ancient buildings in which to worship. These buildings are also among the most challenging to adapt to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. This can make church communities feel as though they are in a cleft stick between the requirements of buildings conservation and disability discrimination.

However, English Heritage publishes a leaflet entitled *Easy Access to Historic Buildings*², which shows some of the innovative (and not necessarily expensive) solutions to this difficulty. There is also help available from the Heritage Lottery Fund for DDA compliance, provided that the works are part of a more general scheme of restoration or repair.

The church has always sought to help disabled people throughout history. In a way the secular world is now catching up with what we have been doing for centuries. The church's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act should not be seen as an extra burden on over-stretched volunteers, but rather as in harmony with the church's mission to its people.

More detailed advice was published by the Diocese of London at the time when the Disability Discrimination Act came into force. Copies of this document can be obtained from the Care of Churches Team at Diocesan house, or on the website at: www.london.anglican.org/DACInDepthAdvice

² This can be downloaded from the English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk

ACCESS AUDIT CHECKLIST

Church:

Building:

Date:

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the church open to visitors during the day?		
Is the church always attended when open?		
Is the church building listed or in the curtilage of another listed building?		
Is the church building in a conservation area?		
How many services are held each week?		
Is the church regularly used for public events other than public worship?		
How many members of the regular congregation have impaired mobility, hearing or vision?		
General notes or comments:		

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EXTERIOR/ APPROACH			YES, NO, N/A	OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Part 1
Signing and lighting	A1	Shared/equivalent access for disabled people?			
	A2	Route adequately signed and obvious?			
	A3	Route adequately lit?			
	A4	Noticeboards lit and with full information and large type?			
Condition	A5	Route free of steps or kerbs?			
	A6	Surface smooth and slip resistant?			
	A7	Free of hazards?			
	A8	At least 1.2m wide?			
	A9	Level (max. 1:20)?			
Car Parking	A10	Car parking for those with mobility problems? Preferably at least two adjacent spaces.			
Ramp:	A11	Ramped access where steps are encountered?			

ANY DISCUSSION REGARDING ADDITIONS OR ALTERATIONS TO THE FABRIC IN RELATION TO DISABILITY SHOULD INVOLVE CONSULTATION WITH YOUR QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTOR IN ORDER TO ENSURE IT COMPLIES WITH MOST RECENT LEGISLATION. ANY RESULTING PROPOSALS TO ALTER THE CHURCH OR AFFECT ITS SETTING SHOULD BE REFERRED TO THE DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT AN EARLY STAGE.

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	A12	Maximum permitted gradient is 1 in 12 (8.3%), and requires 1.2m landing every 5m		
	A13	Gradient of 1 in 15 (6.7%) is preferable if space. Requires 1.2m landing every 10m		
	A14	Passing places every 5m		
	A15	Width of ramp 1.2m?		
	A16	Protective kerbs?		
	A17	Handrails?		
	A18	Ramps/steps non-slip?		
	A19	If no permanent ramp possible, is portable one feasible?		
Steps:	A20	If steps – handrails both sides?		
	A21	- treads/risers all equal?		
	A22	- adequately lit?		
	A23	- clearly marked nosings?		

ACCESS AUDIT CHECKLIST

Church:

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	A24	- landings every 15 steps?		
	A25	If no safe ramps/steps: other vertical provision?		
Overall approach	A26	One approach route for <u>all</u> ?		
ENTRANCE AREA			YES, NO, N/A	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
				Part2
Access to building	E1	Disabled driver space to drop off / pick up?		
	E2	Level threshold into building?		
	E3	If stepped, any alternative level entry?		
	E4	Assisted vertical access to other levels?		
Entrance door (s)	E5	Wheelechair width door opening (750 mm min)? This must be the actual opening including door frame.		
	E6	Door(s) clearly distinguishable?		
	E7	Glazed doors with visibility through full height?		

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	E8	Door furniture at standing/wheelchair height?		
	E9	Door furniture easily operated by all?		
	E10	If door closer, slow action, delayed closing, not a heavy resistance?		
	E11	Glazed screens: toughened glazing, with sight banding at adult/child/wheelchair eye height?		
Floor surfaces	E12	Floor surface non-slip in wet?		
	E13	Door mats should not obstruct access. Taper-edged mats are best, or recessed mats that are regularly checked for wear.		
	E14	If change of floor finish – no trip hazard?		
	E15	- no visual confusion?		
Reception Area	E16	Reception point – suitable for standing/wheelchair height?		
	E17	- fitted with induction loop?		
	E18	All signage at wheelchair height and large type?		

ACCESS AUDIT CHECKLIST

Church:

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	E19	Braille signage? / Tactile plan of building?			
	E20	Public telephone?			
	E21	- at height for all users?			
	E22	- induction loop?			
	E23	Church member on hand to advise/assist?			
INTERIOR MAIN AREAS			YES, NO, N/A	OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Part 3
Access Spaces	M1	Passages/corridors/aisles – min 1.2m wide?			
	M2	- free of obstructions?			
	M3	If lobbies – space between doors for wheelchairs to operate?			
	M4	- turning space? (1.5m diameter)			
	M5	- passing places for wheelchairs (1.8m) Two wheel chairs may need to pass.			

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Floors	M6	Floors – non-slip surface?		
	M7	- steps/hazards well lit?		
	M8	- step-free access at each floor level?		
	M9	- handrail (both sides) to all steps?		
Doors and glazed screens	M10	Doors – wheelchair width (750 mm min)? This must be the actual opening including door frame.		
	M11	- furniture at wheelchair/child height?		
	M12	- operable by all?		
	M13	- if closer, slow action or delayed action?		
	M14	Minimum 300 mm clear space beside opening side of doors?		
	M15	Glazed screens: toughened glazing, with sight banding at adult/child/wheelchair eye height?		
Signing and use of spaces	M16	Well defined signage to all areas/facilities?		
	M17	Appropriate space/seating/sightlines for all disabled persons, and children?		

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	M18	Movable seating stable enough to lean on?		
	M19	Space to park prams/buggies?		
Means of escape	M20	Means of escape – suitable for independent use by <u>all</u> ?		
	M21	- clearly signed from <u>all parts</u> ?		
	M22	- clear of all obstructions?		
	M23	- all doors openable and operable?		
TOILET AREA			YES, NO, N/A	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
				Part 4
Signing and access	T1	Toilets signed from all parts of building?		
	T2	Entry lobby – sufficient size for wheelchair users?		
	T3	- both doors with glazed sight panel?		
WC facilities	T4	Wheelchair access and equipped unisex WC? Should be together with other WCs if possible.		

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	T5	Emergency call system – in above?		
	T6	- means of responding?		
	T7	Cubicles – usable by ambulant disabled?		
	T8	- offer left and right-handed approach?		
	T9	Child-sized WC pans?		
	T10	Baby changing facilities?		
	T11	Sanitary disposal bins?		
	T12	Door fittings/locks easily operable by all?		
	T13	Cubicle doors openable externally in emergency?		
Washbasins	T14	Basin – lever taps?		
	T15	- soap dispenser for each?		
	T16	- low enough for child use?		

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	T17	Hand drying at suitable height for all?		
Floors	T18	Non-slip floors?		

KITCHEN			YES, NO, N/A	OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Part 5
Access	K1	Doors – wheelchair width (750 mm min)?			
	K2	- furniture at wheelchair height?			
	K3	- operable by all?			
	K4	- if closer, slow action or delayed action?			
Facilities	K5	Space under worktops for wheelchair users’ knees?			
	K6	Lever action taps?			
	K7	Accessible switches (lights and power)?			
Floor	K8	Slip-resistant floor?			

ACCESS AUDIT CHECKLIST

Church:

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Registration	K9	Premises registered/approved by local authority?		
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FACILITIES INFORMATION			YES, NO, N/A	OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Part 6
Heating	F1	Adequate heating for infirm, sedentary, arthritic?			
Hearing aids	F2	Hearing assistance? (Induction loops)?			
	F3	Visual aids for hard of hearing?			
Visual aids	F4	Adequate lighting for seated persons?			
	F5	Absence of glare – (natural light)?			
	F6	- artificial light?			
	F7	Large print and Braille literature?			
	F8	Audio aids for partially sighted?			
	F9	Access for guide dogs/hearing dogs?			
Accessibility	F10	Ability to participate in all activities?			

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	F11	Access for all to all liturgical activity?		
	F12	If pews – space for wheelchair users and carers? Should be within body of congregation, not separated.		
	F13	Shelving at height for ambulant and wheelchairs?		
	F14	Lowered counter at hatch, counter or shop?		
	F15	Light and power switches at accessible height?		
Health and Safety	F16	Health & Safety statement/details/responsible persons named?		
	F17	Comprehensive first aid resources?		
	F18	Audio alarm system?		
	F19	Emergency lighting system?		
	F20	Visual alarm system?		
	F21	All alarm points within 30m reach?		
	F22	Public address to all areas?		

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	F23	Pictorial signs for non-English speaking visitors?		
HUMAN RESOURCES			YES, NO, N/A	OVERALL ASSESSMENT
Administrator	H1	On site administrator/supervisor?		Part 7
Health & Safety	H2	Appointed Health & Safety officer?		
Medical	H3	Person qualified in – first aid?		
	H4	- resuscitation		
	H5	- child care?		
	H6	- care of the elderly?		
Sign language	H7	Person skilled in sign language?		
Interpreter	H8	Linguistic abilities? / Interpreter?		
Disabled access	H9	Appointed disabled access officer?		