

# St Johns Church, Kenilworth

## Access and Inclusion Policy

Revision 5.0

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### Introduction

This policy is intended to set out our approach to ensuring that the church buildings, worship, activities and congregations are as welcoming and inclusive to all in the local community, and in particular to people with disabilities.

Under the Equality Act 2010, churches are 'service providers' and therefore all activities that take place in the church buildings need to be considered in terms of the risk people face when interacting with that environment – either as visitors, members of the congregation or ministers and other leaders.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the **Fire Risk Assessment Policy and the Social Media and Website Policy** as there are a number of overlaps.

### Access and inclusion policy statement

St John's policy is to welcome all without discrimination. In particular, we aim to make access as straight forward and safe for people with disabilities. We also want to ensure all people have opportunity to grow spiritually and to be able to use their gifts to enrich the lives of us all.

### What is a disability?

In the Equality Act, disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". The Act protects anyone who has or has had a disability, or who is associated with a disabled person, or who is mistakenly perceived as being disabled. It includes those with physical mobility or co-ordination difficulties, those with poor strength or dexterity, those with impairments of their memory, learning disabilities, impaired speech, vision or hearing, autism, and those with illness which give rise to a disability or a temporary disability, and those with more hidden disabilities such as epilepsy, diabetes, arthritis or mental health issues, for example.

In addition to those directly included in the legislation, churches should be aware that a difficulty in accessing certain facilities or services may also be experienced by people such as pregnant

women; those large or small in stature (including children); parents or others in charge of small children; or those emotionally distressed.

## The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act came into effect in 2010, replacing the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). Its aim is to ban unfair treatment and discrimination based on age, race, sexuality, gender, disability etc. in the workplace, in the provision of goods, services and facilities and in the management of premises. It stipulates that all service providers should make 'reasonable adjustments' to their buildings and services so that disabled people can use them. It is a civil law, so fines cannot be levied for non-compliance however legal action can be taken by anyone – including bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission – if discrimination is evident. It is therefore very important that churches engage with the Equality Act and consider how their buildings are used by others.

## Process

A disability access audit will be performed every **3 years** across all church sites. This audit shall identify the required improvements that are needed to be an inclusive “service provider”. The disability access audit will follow audit guidelines (see references, Annex 2) set out by the diocese and consider, but not limited to, the following areas;

- How do people find your church?
- How do people get here?
- Car parking
- Signs and notice boards are clear
- Entrance
- Lighting
- Use of hearing loops
- Moving around inside the church
- Ease of being able to access facilities including toilets and refreshments
- Being able to access the content of services
- Seating
- Printed and on-screen materials
- Toilets
- Welcoming for people with learning disabilities, autism and Asperger Syndrome.
- Welcoming for people with mental health needs
- Ensuring the website is compliant with current accessibility legislation and guidelines

### What the church is doing to meet the Equality Act

- There is a public bus stop right outside the church building for ease of access
- Dedicated parking places are provided in the car park

- Gaps are provided between rows of seating to provide easy wheelchair access
- Automatic doors are provided on entry to the building to provide easy access in entering and leaving the building
- Signs are provided showing the procedures in the case of a fire
- A hearing loop is provided in the main building for the hard of hearing
- Disabled toilets are provided in the main building and in the halls
- On screen slides use a pale font with dark background to assist those with dyslexia
- Larger font news sheets are provided for those requiring them and we aim to provide a printed copy of on-screen materials for those who require it size 18 sans serif font (Arial/Verdana)
- The website is kept up to date with the latest Government legislation to make it as accessible as possible for all.

Procedures for ensuring people with disabilities can be safely evacuated from the building in an emergency are given at Annex 1 and these will be reviewed every three years at the same time as the audit.

# Annex 1: Policy for Safe Evacuation of Persons with Disabilities

## **The purpose of this document**

St John's Church is committed to promoting access for people who have a disability or long-term medical condition. This includes consideration of the requirements to enable safe and effective evacuation from our buildings in a fire or other emergency, taking into account that some disabilities may mean that they are unable to self-evacuate.

We will comply with relevant legal requirements and guidelines where it is reasonable to do so with the aim of facilitating safe access for all users of the site.

Key legislation:-

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Equality Act 2010

## **General policy for fire escape;**

In the event of a fire, an alarm will be raised. The service leader or group leader will clearly explain to the group what is happening and what people will need to do next.

Fire exits are clearly marked and care will be taken not to block access to these exits.

The congregation will move to the grass area in front of the church in the event of a fire where a check will be made on people's welfare and a check made of children/youth against the register. Any children with special needs should be escorted to the assembly point by their respective teachers.

A fire drill is carried out regularly at least once per year

## **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)**

A Personal Emergency Evacuation Procedure (known as a PEEP), is a procedure designed to outline the emergency requirements of a member of staff or member of the congregation who may require assistance in an emergency. To ensure that persons who require assistance can safely leave the church buildings in an emergency, a PEEP must be completed. This process ensures that members of staff/members of the congregation discuss and take into account specific needs and produce a plan to ensure that their safety is provided for in the event of an emergency.

In the event of having a regular visitor or member of staff or volunteer with a disability, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will be set up for them.

The responsibility for identifying the need for and setting up PEEP's for staff will lie with the Wardens. For regular visitors and volunteers, it will be the responsibility of the leadership teams

for each of the worshipping communities. For regular activities in the church or church building, leaders of client groups will be responsible for having PEEP's in place for any who may have difficulty exiting the building in an emergency.

Client groups will need to identify any individuals who may need a PEEP and a copy of the PEEP will need to be kept in the church office. Staff and regular visitors for whom a PEEP has been completed are responsible for ensuring that they follow the agreed emergency arrangements, as long as doing so does not put them at risk due to the nature of the emergency.

Leaders of communities and activities will seek to identify people who they think may require assistance in the event of an emergency. A regular note in the monthly newsletter will invite those who might require assistance in the case of an emergency to identify themselves to the leaders of their respective communities or activity they regularly attend. This message will be voiced from the front during services from time to time.

In order to identify someone with this need, the following will be carried out:-

- a) The PEEP will take into account the needs of the disabled person and their ideas for how they could leave the building.
- b) The PEEP will take into account the resources (people and equipment) that can reasonably be expected to be available.
- c) The PEEP will be reviewed annually to ensure that both parties are happy with the plan.

Plans will be written and held on file in the office.

### **The PCC will ensure that:**

The Fire Risk Assessment is in place and is kept up to date

That leaders of activities are aware of the need to evacuate the building safely and make sure that procedures are in place to ensure this happen and that enough people have been trained in evacuation procedures and people to help with the safe evacuation of the building are available at all events in the church and church halls.

A procedure for actions in the event of a fire are clearly visible both in the main building as well as the Cavern and halls

This policy was last updated and authorised by PCC in September 2021 and will be reviewed triennially by the PCC.

## Annex 2: References and other links

Diocese of Bath and Wells - Disability – Open to All:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry-for-mission/mission/social-justice/what-we-do/disability-open-to-all/>

Diocese of Bath and Wells - Disability – Open to All - Template for disability access audit:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Template-for-disability-access-audit.doc>

Diocese of Coventry - Access and Providing for Disabilities in Churches

[http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/images/document\\_library/UDR00370.pdf](http://www.dioceseofcoventry.org/images/document_library/UDR00370.pdf)

Church of England - Accessibility Guidance

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/accessibility>

Church Care - Guidance Note - Accessibility and Disabled People

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/CCB\\_Accessibility-and-disabled-people\\_Sep-2012.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/CCB_Accessibility-and-disabled-people_Sep-2012.pdf)

Church of England – A Place to Belong Guide

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/A%20place%20to%20belong%20Guide.pdf>