



ST JOHN THE APOSTLE & EVANGELIST, WATFORD

ACCESS POLICY

Introduction

The Church has always been aware of the presence of people with disabilities, but this has not been reflected in the way that churches over the years have been designed, built, extended and altered. Churches, including that of St John's, have been intended to make strong, sometimes very powerful, architectural statements, which have not placed the highest priority to the needs, or comfort of those attending services or visiting them.

Policy Statement

The PCC are committed to recognising that disability is a perfectly normal, indeed, universal component of life, varying only in degree, diversity and distribution, and being likely to affect every one of us to a greater or lesser extent at some point in our lives.

Objective of this policy

This policy is intended to promote awareness within the parish to these principles and objectives and of the values underlying them; to ensure that PCC employees and office holders are familiar with and implement this access commitment and its objectives to the best of their abilities; and to ensure that activities held at St John's comply with all relevant Disability Discrimination Act ('DDA') legislation.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all of the PCC's activities and covers all personnel, including those permanently employed; temporary staff; contractors; trustees; agents; volunteers; and, consultants.

Providing for a 'broader average'

The DDA makes reference repeatedly to 'disabled persons', and to both disability and environment. Within the terms of the DDA, people with disabilities include:

- elderly people;
- ambulant disabled people;
- wheelchair users;
- people with poor dexterity or little strength;
- people who lack comprehension;
- people who have impaired vision;
- people who have impaired hearing;



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and those terms have now been extended both by addition to the legislation, and by case law, to include:

- people who have an illness which gives rise to a disability, or is potentially likely to do so;
- people who have a temporary disability; and,
- people who have had a disability, the effects of which were relevant at the time at which it was obtained, or which may continue to be so.

In addition to people who are directly covered by the terms of the DDA, 'handicapping' states of varying degree of severity will also arise for:

- people who are excessively large or small in stature, including children;
- mothers-to-be in the latter stages of pregnancy, particularly those with other young children;
- parents and others in charge of small children, particularly those who are using pushchairs;
- people who are emotionally distressed and/or unstable.

The DDA seeks in particular to address the matter of risk and the concern about the interaction of people with their environment.

Commitment

The PCC commits to:

- assess how the church environment may give rise to risks, and how such risks may be reduced or mitigated;
- to consider necessary changes carefully taking into consideration the intended spiritually or specific intention of the building's structure which gave rise to them in the first place, particularly where there is great historic, architectural, cultural and symbolic importance;
- ensure that, as closely as possible, the church environment meets the needs of people as we really are, rather than as we might wish to be, or to have been;
- undertake an access audit triennially and develop an accessibility plan in consultation with the Church's appointed architect, or suitable consultant recommended by the Diocesan Advisory Committee ('DAC').

Review

The PCC's Access Policy will be reviewed triennially, or sooner in response to new legislation, policies or guidance, or specific demand and feedback.