

## Further Information

There are a number of organizations that provide help and guidance for churches seeking to comply with the Equality Act 2010:

**Through The Roof** is a Christian Charity working in partnership with churches and other organisations to promote access and inclusion of disabled people in every area of church life. [www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org).

**The Equality Act 2010** - more information on the Equality Act can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance>

**Part M** of the Building Regulations can be downloaded from: [https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved\\_documents](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved_documents)

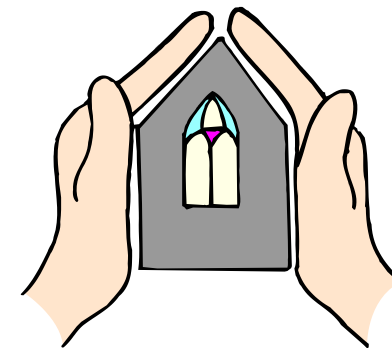
**Equality & Human Rights Commission** - For further in-depth information about the Equalities Act see: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/getting-help-and-advice>



## Thames North Synod

# The Equality Act 2010 How it affects our buildings

(2017)



A large print version of this document is available upon request. Contact Synod Office: 020 7799 5000.

## Introduction

The Equality Act is designed to bring together different pieces of legislation relating to the discrimination of people's age, race, disability, sexuality etc. This guidance booklet deals with the requirements of the Act for people with disabilities and the legal duty placed upon service providers (including churches) to be inclusive and to ensure that our buildings are accessible to disabled people.

As service providers, churches must comply with the Act:

- Not to treat disabled people less favourably for a reason related to their disability
- To make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people
- To do everything reasonable to remove physical barriers to access for disabled people.

## Responsibility to comply

The Equality Act is built upon the Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005, and from the 1st October 2010 service providers have had to take reasonable steps to change their practice, particularly if that practice means that a disabled person is unable to make use of its services. This means that church trustees (elders) have a duty to provide auxiliary aids so that people with disabilities can take part in the 'service' to the same degree as everyone else.

The whole emphasis of the Equality Act is to ensure that disabled people are treated with equality according to their needs. Your church is more likely to comply with the Act if:

- Church members know it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people
- The church establishes a positive policy of including disabled people in all its activities and making sure that all church members know about it
- The church monitors and makes sure that their policy is working in practice
- All elders/leaders/church staff receive disability awareness training
- It is also helpful to confer with disabled people and disability organisations about your buildings and the services you provide
- Carry out annual reviews to ensure that your church is compliant with the Equality Act.

In all cases, it is essential to make sure that the dignity of a disabled person is respected when churches make any sort of service provision. Disabled people are entitled to be asked about how they might be best served and given oppor-

tunity to make the same choices as all of us.

## Access Appraisal

An access appraisal should be carried out to ensure that you have taken into account the needs of people with disabilities. The appraisal will include consideration of:

- The services you provide and how and where you provide them (Service Provision)
- Where barriers exist to people wishing to use your services (Accessibility)
- The significance of your buildings and its fixtures, fittings, furnishings (Significance)
- What disabled people within your congregation and community need to access your services (Experience)

These will all form your Access Plan and should lead you to consider changes that may be required to your practice, policy or procedures. You should not wait until a disabled person turns up and then make necessary arrangements to include them.

The Access Plan will often mean changes to the built environment and further information can be found within Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300. Building regulations or planning approval may be required to adapt your buildings, together with the approval of the Resources Committee.

## Practical solutions

Becoming a church that is compliant with the Equality Act can be expensive, but lack of funds does not mean you should not be thinking about and planning for compliance. Your Access Plan will identify all the areas where you will need to make reasonable changes and these should be prioritised within a phased approach.

Not everything will be expensive and some measures can be implemented immediately, such as greeting people, providing large print copies of any papers or books.