

# *Making the Gospel Accessible*

**A practical disability training guide and  
resource manual for Special Needs  
Coordinators within the British Union of the  
Seventh – day Adventist Church**

*British Union Conference and  
Adventist Special Needs Association joint project*



# **Contents**

---

<b>Church mission statement</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>BUC president's message</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>About the authors</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Purpose &amp; aims</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>How to use this manual</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Special needs coordinator role and responsibility</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The Church and Disabilities: Sophia Nicholls</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Disability in the UK</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Models of disability</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Disability related language</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Understanding people living with disabilities and special needs</b>	<b>27</b>

**The church and barriers to accessing service 34**

**The Church and the DDA: Sharon Platt McDonald 39**

**The Disability Discrimination Act as it relates to churches**

Making the church accessible 41

Ushers / greeters 48

Deacon / deaconesses 48

Special needs team / committee 49

**Engaging the church support for families of individuals**

**with disabilities 51**

**Tools for success: Trudy Young 53**

**Basic communication skills to support the role of the 53**

**special needs coordinator**

<b>Resources</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Adventist Special Needs Association</b>	<b>63</b>
Other organisations and services	66
Useful sources of information	72
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>78</b>
A The law and disability	78
B Audit sheet	84
C UK statistics	85

# Mission Statement

---

*Our mission as a church is to enable EVERY person, able bodied or with any disability, to participate fully in worship, teaching, fellowship and service through an inclusive approach which enables each of them to grow spiritually.*



# Foreword

---

Welcome to the first edition of *Making the Gospel Accessible*.

This document is a practical guide for churches, special needs coordinators and other key individuals enabling them to be accessible to and inclusive of individuals with special needs and disabilities. It will also act as a resource for churches or groups to aid them in their decision making, highlighting key aspects they need to consider in the planning and delivery of services to a diverse population.

This resource is the first step in providing basic information on the varying aspects of integrating all people into the church life. It also provides some resources for where to look for additional information and support where needed.

As a church body, we need to ensure that there is 'access for all' and that where barriers exist, they are addressed as quickly as possible. This helps to facilitate a smoother path making a way for the message of Salvation to reach as many people in our community as possible.

I would like to register my thanks to the British Union Conference for funding this project and for the consultation and support of the Adventist Special Needs Association (ASNA) for their partnership working on this production. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Sophia Nicholls and Trudy Young, co authors of this project and to Dawn Tompkins and Helen Batten (ASNA administrator) for helping to compile this document.

Sharon Platt-McDonald

BUC Special Needs Coordinator / Health Ministries Director

# Acknowledgements

---

We would like to thank the following carers and special needs co-ordinators who contributed towards the development of this manual with their invaluable input, comments and recommendations:

Lydia Ackah, Geneive Ademuyiwa, Ethney Anderson, S Bacchus, Joan Barrett, Caroline Bekaris, Claudette Clarke, Princess Cudjoe, Phyllis Fletcher, Gloria Gordon, Doreen Hines, Witcliff Hudson, Iris Johns, Edith McIntosh, Nigel Nicholls, Joyce Ugbomah, Miriam Wood, Leslie Wood.

# A Word from the President

---



The good news of the Kingdom is for everyone. None is excluded. This is a principle that the British Union takes seriously and is endeavouring to ensure that all in the church community feel served by the various ministries of the church. Consequently, increasing emphasis is being placed on supporting those members of the church community with special needs and disabilities.

Between one-sixth and one-seventh of the worlds population is said to be disabled. When this ratio is applied to the British Union, real figures are at least three thousand members who are disabled in one way or another. This could be a problem with sight, hearing, mobility, mental or physical processes, or an illness.

This manual has been designed to assist local churches with their efforts to create an inclusive environment, one in which members of the church community and those from the wider community feel valued, respected and welcome. People with disabilities in our church community must not be made to feel that they are a burden to society or the church. Every effort must be made by the church corporately and locally to ensure that their experience in the church is as normal as possible.

Sharon Platt-McDonald, BUC Special Needs Coordinator, Sophia Nicholls and Trudy Young are to be commended for providing an informative and practical manual, which I unreservedly recommend to our churches.

Don W McFarlane  
PRESIDENT

# About the Authors

---



**Sharon Platt-McDonald** is the British Union Conference Health Director & Special Needs Coordinator. With 25 years experience in the NHS Sharon has worked with individuals with special needs and disabilities both as a service provider and managing therapists. She has expertise in the areas of rehabilitation, child protection, older people's services and voluntary care. She also holds a stage 1 qualification in British sign language.

Sharon is an author, health columnist and presenter. She is committed to the ethos of personal development and empowering others to make healthy lifestyle choices.



**Sophia Nicholls** is the Hon. Sec / Trustee and co founder of the Adventist Special Needs Association (ASNA). ASNA supports people living with special needs and disabilities by providing access to resources, advice, information, training, respite and leisure. It is a small charity managed and supported by volunteers. As well as the main contact for the charity, Sophia is also involved in the research, development and delivery of ASNA Disability Awareness Training Program.

Sophia lives in Oxfordshire where she volunteers as a trustee for the South and Vale Carers Centre. She is a member of the Carers Strategy Steering group in Oxfordshire, advisor to the Oxfordshire Carers Forum and is the Oxfordshire Volunteer Parent Representative for Contact a Family, a national charity supporting families with disabled children.

She has volunteered as a fundraiser for the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, National Blind Children's Society and MAC (charity for children born without eyes).

Prior to her current voluntary work, Sophia completed her first degree in Podiatry in 1989 followed by an MSc in Physiology and MA in Education. She worked for 3 years in the National Health Service as a Senior Podiatrist in central London then in education for 10 years as a senior lecturer, admissions director and external examiner for the Universities of Brighton, Reading and Oxford Brookes. She currently manages her private practice in Oxfordshire.

Sophia is married to Nigel Nicholls with two boys Mathew and Christopher - James. The eldest, Matthew is 12 years old and has severe learning and physical disabilities. Matthew is the inspiration behind the development of ASNA.



**Trudy Young** is a qualified Christian Counsellor, officially retired, but still doing many hours of voluntary counselling for some charities. For several years previous to her retirement Trudy was The counselling coordinator for Cornerstone Counselling Service, a service sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Over the years she has come to recognise that in a busy world we rarely learn the skills of listening, attentively, to those around us. Trudy's continuing passion in life is, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to enable others to be the best they can be in life; to achieve their full potential.

Trudy is also very active in her Church, serving as Elder and in various capacities. She is also a trustee of ASNA.

# Purpose and Aims

---

Our ultimate goal is to create an environment within our churches and communities where individuals feel welcomed and their diverse needs met within the confines of the services and programs that we offer.

Through this manual it is hoped that the following will be achieved:

- 1) Provide general information and support for the newly appointed Special Needs Coordinators assigned to each church in the BUC
- 2) Act as an aid to enhancing the role of the special needs coordinator and further facilitate the scope of the role description they are required to fulfil
- 3) Identifying areas where appropriate training is needed
- 4) Ensure all churches are aware of the DDA guidelines as it relates to churches and encourage compliance through practical steps relating to the legal requirements
- 5) Provide a supportive framework within which each church and special needs coordinator can work and act as a general guide to identifying key goals and measuring outcomes

It is my hope and prayer that God will continue to bless our ministry as we embrace the diverse needs of others and endeavour to enhance the experience of all in our community as we serve with the compassion of Christ.

Sharon Platt-McDonald

BUC Special Needs Coordinator / Health Ministries Director

# Outcomes

---

In order to evaluate the efficacy of your objectives and measure whether your goals have been adequately met, it is important to outline the outcomes.

## **Action plan**

Prior to outlining your outcomes, implementing an action plan is a useful tool to guide your progress. Developing an Action Plan is one way of assessing progress as you can use it as a milestone marker and setting manageable steps towards your goal. You can also use the Action Plan to measure how far you have reached in terms of achieving your goals and identifying when you have reached them.

## **Documenting outcomes**

### ***Setting a time frame:***

- This is important to document so that your goals have an identified end point or completion date in which you aim to achieve your goal.
- The time frame also reminds you when it is time to conduct your evaluation.

### ***Evaluating outcomes:***

- Set and document achievement indicators. These are statements or markers that denote when a goal is achieved. They are documented as part of the evaluation process as a measurement tool to assess level of success or scope of the goal met.
- When you review your achievement indicators you will be able to identify those areas that were difficult to achieve and state possible solutions to the problems that you have encountered.
- Evaluating outcomes also enables you to identify some areas that need development or highlight certain areas where more work is needed.

***Writing up the evaluation:***

- Report writing is an important part of evaluation. This enables you to document and analyse your activities detailing what was achieved, the extent to which it was achieved, what you did well, what did not go so well and what difficulties were encountered.

***Presenting the results:***

- As well as presenting written documentation of the results, it will also be beneficial to present your findings to the church board and the general congregation.
- Presenting the results publically raises awareness of the issues and gives everyone ownership and a greater sense of involvement. It is easier then to engage individuals in the additional follow up action plans.
- From the evaluation and presentation of the results, a new Action Plan can be drawn up with new goals and strategies for the ongoing process and to plot the direction ahead.

# How to use this manual

---

This manual highlights the issues that people with disabilities face generally and in the church, it proposes some solutions to overcome these issues and it provides resources to support your work.

This tool has been written as a guide and can be read in its entirety or you can dip in and out of the different sections as required.

It is divided into four main sections. The first two sections identify the issues that our churches face with respect to disability and our responsibility to our membership and society.

The third section deals with developing an essential **tool for success** in dealing with the church membership at large and, most importantly, members who have special needs and disabilities.

The final section provides a list of resources and describes the work of the Adventist Special Needs Association. This section also includes other very useful organisations and services involved in the disability field and concludes with further information to support the main text.

Throughout the text there are some key points that have been highlighted in **speech bubbles** for your close attention. Please take note of these as you go through the manual.

Finally, some **action points** have also been recommended throughout the text and we would like to encourage you to take these actions on board as you develop the special needs ministry in your church and local community.

Sophia Nicholls

# **Special Needs Coordinator Role & Responsibility**

---

## **Role Summary**

To function within the specification of the Disabilities Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 as it relates to churches.

Responsible for the development, coordination and maintenance of church activities as related to ministry for individuals with specific needs due to mental, emotional, or physical disabilities and the support of their families.

## **Role Accountability**

As indicated in the church manual, the Special Needs and Disabilities Ministries is a part of the Personal Ministries of the church and works directly under the supervision of the Personal Ministries Director. However, it is also closely linked with the Health Ministries and Community Services department.

## **Role Duties**

1. To monitor physical access to the church facilities and functions, and to make recommendations to provide a fully accessible church.
2. To provide education for the membership concerning mental, emotional, and physical disabilities and the people they affect.
3. To assist in the process of assimilation of persons with special needs and disabilities into active church life and develop support for their families.
4. To develop and implement a method of identification of the needs of persons with special needs and disabilities in the church and the community.

5. To develop, coordinate and maintain vibrant and useful programs that meet the spiritual needs of persons with special needs and disabilities and their families.
6. To serve as a liaison with organisations and personnel providing services to people with special needs and disabilities such as ASNA (Adventist Special Needs Association), and the British Union Conference Special Needs Coordinator. Other Christian organisations like Through the Roof also provide information and advice.
7. To promote the services, training and programs provided by the above mentioned organisations and personnel within the local church.

### **Spiritual Gifts Desired**

Mercy

Helps

Communication

Administration

Leadership

Skills in coordinating and organising are also desirable.

Sharon Platt-McDonald

BUC Health Ministries Director

January 2007

# Disability in the UK

---


## Did you know?

- There are over 650 million people with a disability in the world (WHO)
- 10 million people in the UK have a disability
- It is possible to become disabled at any time.
- People with disability are the:
  - Poorest in the world
  - Least educated
  - Least access to transport
  - Least evangelised/ lowest church involvement.

**What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about disabilities or those with special needs? Here are some UK statistics to consider.**

- Only 5% of disabled people are wheelchair users
- 1million people are registered blind
- 750,000 people cannot see well enough to read a newspaper or recognise someone across a street
- 8 million people have a degree of hearing loss
- 2.5 million use hearing aids
- 75, 000 are profoundly deaf.1.25 million with learning disabilities

- 410,000 people with epilepsy
- 250,000 with facial disfigurement
- 3% of children under 16 have one or more disabilities
- 1 person in 3 will have a mental illness
- 1 in 4 households are affected by disability
- 95% of the population will experience disability at some point in their lives.

 **Action: Thinking about your church population and membership, calculate the potential percentage or number of people who may be disabled or have a mental illness.**

# Models of Disability

---

*What is your attitude towards people with a disability?*

Let us look at two models of disability used to summarise different attitudes towards people with a disability. The Medical Model and Social Models. **The social model, developed by disabled people, says that organisational and attitudinal structures limit access to services.**

- ❖ The Medical Model focuses on **limitations, inabilities** and on the medical details of disability. This model assumes disabled people have a problem which needs to be fixed or cured. Those who hold to this model create a result in disabled people being seen as **dependent and as needing** 'looking after' removing personal choice.
- ❖ The Social model focuses on the effect that society and poor built environments create marginalisation and lack of access. It also assumes that society and the surrounding environment need to be changed to enable disabled people to participate fully. Thus resulting in an **independent, fully accepted member of the society** and the church body.

The application of the social model has led to the growth of independent living thus the person with the disability retains control of their lives.

**The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)** uses the medical model to define a disabled person: *Someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out iv) normal day-to-day activities*


***Which model do you support?***

***How does your attitude affect your personal***

***ministry and the ministry of your local church?***

***Are the gifts and talents of people with disabilities***

***welcomed in your congregation and community?***

** Action: Jot down the first words and phrases that come to your mind when you think about the term ‘disabled’**

## Is your church complete?

Revisit 1 Corinthians 12: 22 – 23 as you ponder this question. This verse helps us determine the make up of our church body. Most churches have difficulty in ministering to disabled people simply because of some basic fears and lack of awareness. Moving past these attitudinal barriers and misunderstandings we'll discover the joy of caring for someone simply based on the preciousness of their souls, not on their physical attractiveness and intellectual capabilities or social position. The Theological model supports this understanding of people with disability.



**Multi - sensory Worship Service for people with disabilities and special needs in Reading Seventh – day Adventist church**

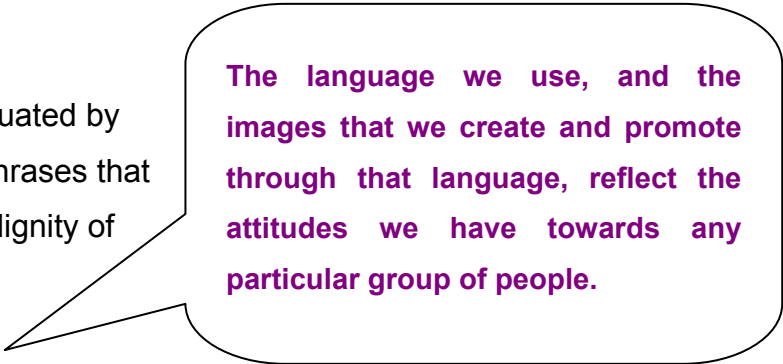
# Disability Related Language

---

Reference: <http://www.csun.edu/~sp20558/dis/lang.html>

## Basic Information

Our language is picked up and evaluated by others around us. The words and phrases that are preferred show respect for the dignity of people with disabilities.



The language we use, and the images that we create and promote through that language, reflect the attitudes we have towards any particular group of people.

Some describe this as "people-first" language where the individual is recognized as a person first, then further defined in terms of their characteristic, disability, or functional limitation (i.e. person who is deaf); likewise, services and programs do not have disabilities, but they are provided for people who do.

## Preferred Terms and Expressions

These words and expressions are currently preferred and reflect a positive attitude. Some language is "trendy" and meanings may vary depending on context or locale.

- person with a disability
- disabled
- hearing impaired
- deaf
- psychologically/emotionally disabled
- non-disabled
- developmentally disabled
- mentally retarded
- mobility disability
- wheelchair-user or uses a wheelchair
- person with cerebral palsy
- person with paraplegia
- blind
- low vision
- vision impaired

Again, the ideal is to incorporate these words into our language in a way that expresses the dignity of the person.

### Outdated/Inaccurate Terms and Expressions

Eliminating the bad words is as important as using the good words. These words and expressions have strong negative, derogatory connotations.

Avoid using them and discourage their use by others:

We are often not aware of the biases or negative attitudes expressed in our language.

- handicapped
- cerebral-palsied
- crazy
- insane
- cripple
- cripp
- deaf mute
- defective
- deaf and dumb
- deformed
- gimp
- invalid
- maimed
- paralytic
- lame
- arthritic
- epileptic
- poor unfortunate
- spastic
- spaz
- retard
- afflicted
- victim
- withered
- stricken
- wheelchair-bound
- confined to a wheelchair

### Examples of Good and Bad Usage

Language should accurately portray an individual or situation. It should emphasise the person rather than the disability.

Don't say. . . "A large bank in Southern California modified its building for its **handicapped employees and customers**. Subsequently, the bank initiated an on-the-job managerial training programme which included **afflicted college seniors**. Participants included those **stricken with various conditions**."

But instead say . . . "A large bank in Southern California modified its building for its **employees and customers with disabilities**. Subsequently, the bank initiated an on-the-job managerial training program which included **college seniors with disabilities**. Participants included **individuals who had either cerebral palsy, psychological/emotional disability, or a hearing impairment**."

### **Other Considerations**

Our attitudes towards people with disabilities are revealed when talking about people who are not disabled. When we say "able-bodied" or "normal", we must be aware of the subtle message or implication that we feel people with disabilities are not "able" or "healthy" or are "abnormal". This also applies to programmes or services provided for people who are not necessarily disabled that are described as, for example, "regular" with the implication that services provided to people with disabilities are "irregular."

Not all people with disabilities agree on which language or terminology is preferred like any other large, yet identifiable group of people. Individuals will vary as to how they refer to themselves and how they refer to them. The suggestions given above will apply to most people and be correct in most situations.

### **Common Courtesies**

*Reference: <http://www.scips.worc.ac.uk/etiquette.html>*

- Avoid attaching labels to people with or without impairments. Do not make assumptions about the presence or absence of impairment, some people have hidden disabilities such as epilepsy or asthma. Medical labels are undesirable and misleading as no two people are alike. Medical labels say nothing about the individual and tend to reinforce stereotypes of disabled people as *patients*, powerless and wholly dependent on the medical profession.

- It is dehumanising to talk of people in terms of a condition. Do not talk about *a dyslexic* or *an epileptic* - it is far preferable to say *she/he has dyslexia / she/he has epilepsy*.
- Do not use the word *disabled* as a noun (*the disabled*), it implies a homogenous group separate from the rest of society. Everyone is an individual, people with disabilities do not constitute a group apart.
- Treat adults in a manner befitting adults, do not patronise disabled learners.
- Do offer assistance to a disabled person, as appropriate, but wait until your offer has been accepted before you help. Do not assume that you know the best way of helping, listen to any instructions.
- Do not be embarrassed about using common expressions such as *I see what you mean* which may relate to a person's impairment.
- Make eye contact and talk directly to the disabled person rather than through a companion.
- Make appropriate physical contact with disabled people according to the situation in the same way you would with anyone else.
- Do not make assumptions about an individual's ability to do certain things. Disabled people develop their own methods of overcoming the everyday problems they encounter
- Do not assume that just because an impairment is not visible, it does not exist. Many disabled people with hidden impairments can experience a lot of discrimination. The majority of disabled people don't use wheelchairs
- Treat disabled people as you would treat any other person i.e. as a woman, as a man, as a parent, as a worker. If an individual needs time to do things, be patient
- Do not be embarrassed should you use common expressions such as "see you later" or "I might run into you", then realise they may obliquely relate to a persons impairment
- Do not use behaviour more appropriate for dealing with children, e.g. literally or figuratively patting a wheelchair user on the head
- Do not assume that an offer of assistance will automatically be welcome. Wait until your offer is accepted. Even then do not assume you know the

best way of helping. Instead, listen to any instructions you are given by the expert. (The one who receives the assistance)

- Do not insult a disabled person by talking to them through a companion "does she/he take sugar" syndrome
- Relax, speak normally and stand in front to allow eye contact to be made, in the same way you would when talking to anyone else
- When making physical contact, whether verbal or body language. Respect boundaries and personal space

# Understanding People Living with Disabilities and Special Needs

---



What are the experiences of people living with a disability?

## Carers

Every day, another six thousand people take on a caring responsibility. Every year 2 million people become carers. The term 'carer' is used to distinguish those who provide care for others on an *unpaid* basis, apart from those who are paid (care workers, home helps and people employed by someone with a disability).

Carers provide unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner. Carers give so much to society yet as a consequence of caring, they experience ill health, poverty and discrimination.

This section looks at the experiences of different carers, parent carers, young carers and carers who care for adults.

## Parent Carers

This article was written by Emily Perl Kingsley, a mother who gave birth to a child with Downs syndrome. The content of the article highlights the emotional roller coaster of excitement and disappointment parent carers experience after the birth of a child with special needs.

## WELCOME TO HOLLAND

c1987 by Emily Perl Kingsley. All rights reserved

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

## Young Carers

According to the charity Carers UK, there is a growing number of young carers – current estimate stands at around 175,000. Carers National Association describes a young carer as **"anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of a person, most commonly a parent or brother or sister, who is ill or has a disability, mental health problem or problems with substance abuse"**

These restrictions may include, among many others, having their schooling affected, not being able to do day to day activities and being deprived of opportunities to see their friends. Young carers are at risk of social exclusion. There is limited opportunity for young carers to meet with their friends or to air their concerns about their caring responsibilities.

The impact of this can include underachievement or absenteeism at school, mental or physical ill-health and poverty. This put them at risk of social exclusion. Young carers are too afraid to ask for help for fear that they'll be judged inadequate, or that they will be taken into care themselves because they are not coping with the situation.

Understanding these issues help us to work effectively with young carers.



**A brother writes:**

Having a brother with autism can be challenging, in that there are certain games I cannot play with him. However, he has taught me to be a more understanding and loving person. The way other children react to him shows me who my real friends are.

His strength is amazing. He is one person I know bullies would not go near. He has great talent in cycling and swimming. I admire his gold medals for swimming and running.

He can be great fun to be with. Although people see him as having a disability, I see him as extraordinary.

**A sister writes:**

Having a disabled sibling is sort of like English weather, sometimes it's good but unfortunately most times it's bad. I am lucky to have a sister who is not on the worst end of the autistic spectrum. She does show quite challenging behaviour but unlike quite a few autistic children she can do quite a lot of normal things. She can talk, read and write quite well and she is a very friendly person. She makes me laugh quite a lot and I forget how difficult she is. Sometimes you don't know whether to laugh, scream, hug her or cry but you carry on anyway.

It has taken me quite a while to overcome feelings of embarrassment or annoyance in public. I'm still not over it but I'm trying. Sometimes before you react to her behaviour you have to stop, take a step back and remember that she doesn't mean half the things she does.

## Living with a Disability

There are 10 million people in the UK with a disability. Review the statistics on page 14 & 15 and Appendix c.



Disability of any kind will present challenges, but that doesn't mean that life with a disability can't be fulfilling. For most people, part of a fulfilling life is having control over their day-to-day activities and being able to choose how they want to live.

The prevalence of disability increases with age; of the UK's 10 million disabled people, only 700,000 are children.

As time goes by, an increasing proportion of the population will live with a disability. This is because we're living longer and improved medical treatments are allowing more people to manage long-term health problems. The Equality and Human Rights Commission, which replaced the Disabled Rights Commission in October 2007, says that by 2020 58% of people older than 50 will live with a long-term health condition.

Over 5.2 million disabled people are of working age – 18% of working population.

**Yet disabled people are over 6 times more likely than non-disabled people to be out of work.**

## **Carers of Adults**

### **Parents write:**

We first became foster parents to John many years ago. He had been left in a children's home by his mother who was sick. As he got to school age, we realised that he had some problems in learning. It took him some years to learn to read and, after he was 11 years old, he had several psychotic episodes when he became obsessed with certain thoughts. Later he was diagnosed with Asbergers Syndrome, but too late to help him with his educational needs. He still spends Sabbaths with us and is a very dedicated Christian.

After Miriam trained as a music therapist we read of an 11 year old girl who needed a home. Clare attended special education and needed a lot of emotional help after neglect and abuse as a young child. She had always wanted a younger brother or sister so, when we saw that leuan also needed a home, we applied to foster him. He also had a learning disability and when he lived with us we realised he was autistic too.

It has been an interesting life ... we have so much enjoyed bringing up our family through all its twists and turns. In recent years having the support of ASNA has been special for us.

It is a pity that there is not a structured means of support for leuan and Clare within the Church for the future. We are now retiring and they both need Adventist placements so that they can continue to live in the way they have been brought up. But adults with a learning disability are not quite as appealing to people as children. What a pity to leave these special people out on a limb at a time when they still need so much support to live and continue their Christian experience.

Miriam & Leslie Wood

Understanding these issues will inform your ministry to members within the church and local community.

## **Action: Carry out a church survey**

Use these questions to help determine the following:

1. Are there any members within your church with special needs and disabilities?
2. Are there any members with relatives with disabilities and special needs?
3. What are the needs of the members with disabilities and special needs?
4. What can your church do to support the needs of the membership? (Try to be realistic when addressing this question and set time frames towards achieving a clear action plan in meeting these needs. **Remember**, we all benefit from any positive changes we make towards a more inclusive church.)

# The Church and Barriers to Accessing Services

---

How accessible is your church?

## Checklist:

- Are your church services and activities accessible to every individual including those with disabilities and special needs whether mental, physical, social or emotional?
- Are you aware of the needs of adults and children with special needs and disabilities in your church?
- Do you meet the needs of adults and children with special needs and disabilities in your church?
- Are there features and functions of your church that may pose a hindrance for an individual with special needs or a disability?
- Do your clubs, groups, activities and services welcome and are open and available to individuals with special needs and disabilities?
- Do you offer any support to the families of individuals with special needs and disabilities?

**People living with special needs and disabilities and their families are said to experience two main barriers to accessing services in their churches and local communities.**

- 1. Attitudinal barriers**
- 2. Environmental barriers**

In order to be accessible to and inclusive of individuals with special needs and disabilities, churches or groups need to consider the following:

**Attitudinal Issues -**

- Do you focus on the limitations and inabilities of people with disabilities?
- Do you assume that disabled people have a 'problem' which needs to be 'cured' or 'fixed'? OR
- Do you assume that your church structures and attitudes need to be changed to enable disabled people to participate fully in the life of the church?

**Jackie Mills Fernald says "Congregations get stuck on the issue of money, or they believe that once they raise the money and address the barriers of architecture, the job is complete," she said. "The greater challenge is to eliminate the barriers to attitude." <sup>1</sup>**

As a church, we need to ensure that there is 'access for all' and that these barriers, if they exist, are addressed as quickly as possible thereby making a way for the message of Salvation to reach as many people in our community as possible.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jackie Mills-Fernald, director of Access Ministries at McLean Bible, trains leaders at other churches on how to increase services for the disabled. She also recently organized the Capital Area Disabilities Ministries, a coalition of 20 Washington area churches interested in improving access for people with disabilities

## **Environmental Issues –**

Is the picture below the experience of wheelchair users in your church? This member will not be able to access the services provided by your church community unless this barrier is removed.



## **Action:**

# **Your church Building: 20 Questions**

**This is a very basic checklist to alert you to the possible difficulties in the accessibility of your church building.**

1. Is there a parking bay for those with a disability in the church car park or immediately outside the church entrance?
2. Is it possible to get from a parked car to any area in the building without going up or down a step or stairs?
3. Are paths of a continuous common surface, not interrupted by step?
4. Are steps easy to see?
5. Are there ramps with hand rails?
6. Is there at least one primary entrance to each building usable by wheelchair users?
7. Can doors be opened easily?

8. Is the floor level each side of doors?
9. Can the service be heard clearly?
10. Is there an induction loop for hearing aid users?
11. Is there adequate lighting arranged to prevent shadows on those speaking?
12. If an OHP is used, are there large print paper copies available for people unable to see the screen?
13. Is there space for wheelchair users?
14. Are there seats with arms and large leg room for people with mobility impairments?
15. Can people take communion without taking steps?
16. Can someone in a wheel chair be baptised?
17. Is there an accessible toilet for wheelchair users?
18. Can a disabled person access refreshments or a telephone?
19. Are there large print bible or hymnals available for use?
20. Is there a space for families with young children with a disability to go if necessary?

**This list is by no means exhaustive but can be used as an initial discussion tool for your church board in addressing any environment barriers that may exist in your church.**

- Access to all areas
- Ramps or lifts
- Handrails
- Seating for individuals who use wheelchairs
- A loop system
- Adequate PA systems
- Signed services
- Adequate lighting
- Printed materials available in large print, Braille, or other formats such as tapes or CD's
- Printed sermons
- Taped sermons
- An accessible toilet
- Reserved parking spaces
- Transport available for individuals with disabilities or special needs

**If you do not have the above in place it does not mean that you can't minister to people with special needs and disabilities. However having the facilities stated above will make it easier for these individuals to attend your church or group and enhance the experience that they have.**

 **Action:**

**Complete a church audit to determine the gaps in your service.**

# Disability Discrimination as it Relates to Churches

---

In respect to churches, it is commonly assumed that disability discrimination has much to do with access to buildings. In so doing many churches have failed to reach out to a substantial proportion of the population. This is regrettable as the aspect of outreach is a fundamental theme of the Gospel.

This section outlines some key aspects of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and provides some practical pointers to ensuring compliance with the law.

**A comprehensive outline of the legal requirements of the Act as it relates to churches is found in appendix (a) at the back of the manual. Please read this section to facilitate your understanding of this section of the manual.**

## **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Your Church**

The duties of The Disability Discrimination Act have been introduced in three stages:

**Since December 1996** it has been unlawful for churches to treat children and adults with disabilities less favourably for a reason related to their disability.

**Since October 1999** churches, under Section 21 of the DDA, have had to make 'reasonable adjustments' for people with disabilities, such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provide services. The 'adjustments' the Act

requires are to policies, practices and procedures which could exclude people with disabilities.

**Since October 2004** churches will have had to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical features of the premises to overcome barriers which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to have access to the building or service.

### **Interpreting the Act**

We explore here the wider context of service delivery which seeks to embrace the needs of all in a non-discriminatory fashion. This will enable the church to lead the way in welcoming and being inclusive of all individuals in the community.

### **Making adjustments**

The term 'reasonable adjustments' that the law requires us to make refers to both physical features to the premises to overcome barriers and also adaptations to our services which will ensure that they are more inclusive of individuals with special needs and disabilities. These will be covered under the heading Making the Church Accessible. A further heading under ushers/ greeters, deacons and deaconesses highlights action points for these key individuals at the forefront of assisting church attendees.

# **Making the Church Accessible**

## ***PARKING***

- Designated spaces for disabled parking
- Situated near enough to the entrance of the building
- Sufficient space to allow wheelchair use from the car at lowered curbs

## ***SEATING***

- Sufficient aisle space for disabled access
- Sufficient reserved seats to allow family and friends to sit with disabled person attending the service with them

## ***TOILET FACILITIES***

- New builds will now have to comply with the current building regulations provisions in regards to accessible toilets

## ***LIGHTING***

- Sufficient lighting is necessary for safety
- Ensure lighting is adequate for visibility of song books and other materials used in the service
- Check strip lighting regularly to ensure it does not flicker
- Avoid glare and silhouetting
- Ensure external paths are well illuminated

## ***HEALTH AND SAFETY***

- Work with the Health and Safety officer to ensure the needs of people with disabilities and special needs are met
- Churches should undertake a risk assessment in connection with disabled and special needs individuals
- Carry out an audit of the churches insurance policy

## ***EMERGENCY EXITS AND ESCAPE PLANS***

- The church should consider how it would evacuate people with disabilities from its buildings in an emergency
- Undertake a test of emergency procedures to audit and assess how effective the procedure and practice is
- These procedures should be written in a policy
- Include and seek assistance from the Fire Officer

## ***SIGNAGE***

- Consider signs to display what facilities you have and how they are accessed
- Ensure directions to accessible toilets are properly indicated
- Ensure clear visibility of fire exit signs.

## ***DISPLAYS***

- Make all displays accessible so it can be clearly read even from a wheel chair
- Ensure literature is easily reached

## ***CHURCH NOTICES***

- Ensure accessibility to all
- Present visually and in a clear format
- Present simply for those with learning difficulties
- Reinforce with reminder announcements

## ***DOORS***

To prevent discriminatory practice consider the following:

- Visibility of doors
- Surrounds that distinguishes them for full visibility
- Suitable width for wheelchair access
- Height of door handles
- Easy operation of door handles
- Visibility panels for standing and sitting levels
- Minimising door closure force

### ***LOOP SYSTEM***

- Consider needs of the church i.e. whether one microphone is sufficient
- In larger buildings with more services and complex PA system all PA operators should be fully conversant with how to send an appropriate signal to the loop
- Discuss with loop users what blend of sound they prefer to hear

### ***BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE***

- The church should offer extending training to at least one individual who may be interested in becoming trained in BSL
- For signing in services it is preferable to use sign language above level 2
- Signing can be tiring so it may be advantageous to have two signers for a major church event or full days service.

### ***AUDIO TAPE***

- Consider providing taped versions of church services and build up a tape library for individuals to access when necessary
- Ensure availability of recordings and that they are clearly labelled
- Secure a regular supply for those individuals who are unable to access the church regularly
- Bearing in mind the needs of those with special needs and disabilities ensure a simple process for those who wish to reserve tapes/ DVD's/ CD's

### ***CHURCH NEWSLETTER***

- Make a large type version available for individuals with visual disabilities
- The minimal reasonable standard for this and other accessible documentation is 16 font Sans Serif or Shruti
- Avoid using pale type
- Try not to print over images which can make reading the words challenging
- Consider using contrasting colours

- Avoid using glossy paper as light reflections can make reading difficult. Use matt paper instead

### ***BRAILLE***

- Churches should consider putting some of its regular information in Braille format
- Systems can be obtained from specialist charities
- Consider purchasing a small selection of Braille songbooks/ hymns and bibles
- Church ushers, deacons/deaconess should be alerted to the use of these resources and noting individuals who may need them and giving assistance in doing so

### ***OVERHEAD PROJECTORS***

- Subject to copyright you should make copies of slides in larger print format available. The recommendation is for a minimum 30 - point type
- Avoid handwritten slides
- If using Microsoft PowerPoint ensure type is sufficiently large and clearly visible from the back of the church
- If using Songpro or other song sheet resources ensure that the type is sufficiently clear as previously stated
- If using film clips consider those with sub-titles

### ***INTERNET USAGE***

Technology now ensure that we have the opportunity to receive information and services in alternative format. Consider the following suggestions to enhance access:

- Post sermon notes on the internet. This will ensure those who are unable to get to church to access the message for the day and those with learning difficulties to study it at their leisure
- Ensure the website is designed for easy access and clear visibility
- Be mindful of individuals with dyslexia and colour challenges

## ***PLATFORM***

- Ensure easy accessibility to the platform, the lectern and the pulpit

## ***STAIRS***

- Ensure both external and internal stairs are non-slip
- Ensure all stairs are clearly marked top aid visibility
- Ensure adequate and secure handrails

## ***RAMPS***

- Ensure these are erected to the legal specifications
- Provide appropriate and secure handrails

## ***CARPETS AND COLOUR SCHEMES***

- When providing the above check that contrasting colours are used to enable walls and floors to be clearly visible and distinctive
- Ensure carpets are practical and user friendly for wheelchair use

## ***SERVICES***

- Your Disability team or committee should give careful thought to how accessible your services and content are
- Formulate service content in a format that will encourage attendance of those with learning disabilities
- Utilise visual displays
- Use more simple songs easy to understand that has less words and more repetitive phrases

## ***COMMUNION***

- Work with the deacons and deaconesses to ensure one of their team is designated to offer assistance to individual and their helpers should they require it
- Ensure adequate facilities and privacy if necessary for both male and females for the foot washing ceremony

- Ensure the deacons are aware of where the individuals with disabilities and special needs are sitting during communion so that they can participate freely and access the emblems without difficulty

### ***BAPTISM***

- Liaise with the officiating minister so he is fully acquainted with the individual getting baptised and aware of their disability or special needs
- Consult with the officiating minister to ensure the right facilities and timing to avoid embarrassment or difficulties
- Work with the deacons and deaconesses to ensure their team is adequately prepared to offer appropriate assistance to the baptismal candidate

### ***PLAYGROUPS, MOTHER AND TODDLER CLUBS, AND CHILD CENTRES***

- Ensure adequate staffing and that all staff members are conversant with the needs of the disabled or special needs child or adult
- Ensure activities undertaken are suitable for all attendees or adapted to facilitate the inclusion of all

### ***CHURCH SHOPS, CAFES AND RESTURANTS***

In addition to the points indicated for the main church building consider the following suggestions:

- Assistance with request to gain access to all parts of the building
- Assistance with reading menus
- Assistance in opening doors
- Ensure adequate maintenance of toilet facilities
- Ensure adequate chairs and seating areas
- Ensure adequate access between tables
- Ensure adequate legroom under counters
- Provide spotlighting on wall menus
- Provide assistance with shelving and access to all counter resources
- Allow customer to pay at their table if access at the till is difficult

## ***OFFSITE TRIPS***

- When planning an outing or church trip always consult with the individual who has a disability or special need so that their needs are planned for
- It is advisable to call the location ahead of the event. This ensures that the needs of these individuals will be met.
- Inform the individual with special needs or a disability that you will be calling the venue to see if they have any questions they themselves would like to ask. This will help to alert you beforehand of the full picture and ensure that all expressed and anticipated needs are met.
- Some questions you might like to ask the proprietors of the venue or event are the following:

- 1. Are the buildings wheelchair accessible?**
- 2. Are the paths and parking lots paved?**
- 3. Are exits clearly marked?**
- 4. Will large print of materials be available?**
- 5. Where is the nearest hospital?**
- 6. Will there be an BSL interpreter?**
- 7. If movie clips will be shown, will it have captioning?**

## ***OPERATING IN A RENTED BUILDING***

- There are specific guidelines for rented accommodation. Make sure you note these in the full legal guidelines document in appendix (a).

## ***DAUGHTER CHURCHES AND BRANCHES***

- The same principles apply as for the mother church

## **Ushers and Greeters**

It is essential that the ushers and greeters in your church have some basic training to relate to people with disabilities. They should be knowledgeable about the following:

- basic wheelchair etiquette,
- where to find special needs amenities (i.e. large print items,
- Braille books if they are available,
- assistive listening devices, fragrance free section), and how to use
- appropriate language when referring to a person with disabilities. This is discussed in more detail under the section on communication.

## **Deacons and Deaconesses**

By its very nature the role of deacons and deaconesses ...that they come into contact with a range of individuals each week and are on the 'front line' in welcoming and dealing with individuals with disabilities. It is key that deacon and deaconesses are adequately trained.

The following is a list of suggestive areas of training that church officers in these roles can undertake in order to adequately meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

- Is conversant with the church manual reference to the churches responsibility to people with disabilities
- Clear badges to identify themselves and deacons and deaconesses
- The correct language to use when referring to individuals with disabilities
- Knowing how to speak to deaf and hard of hearing people
- Knowing how to communicate with people who have a visual impairment
- Knowing how to communicate with people who have learning disabilities
- Dealing with people with facial disfigurement
- Dealing with adequate seating to comfortably accommodate individuals with special needs

- Providing seating with family and friends of the individuals with a special need
- Able to handle wheelchairs
- Training on how to deal with medical emergencies, knowing who to contact in the event of an emergency and who the qualified health professionals and first aiders are in the congregation
- Is conversant with the Church's health and safety policy
- Able to demonstrate the use of the loop for anyone requiring it
- Able to deal with guide dogs
- Liaising with signers when they are present for signed services to enable those needing signing during the services to be in a position where they can benefit from it
- Have full knowledge of the church facilities and can give efficient help and support to areas such as accessible toilets
- Able to give comprehensive information about the services the church provides
- The provision of special songbooks and other aids

## **The Disability Team/Committee**

### **Steps to Setting up your Team or Committee**

- Establish a core group to lead. This will enable them to take the initiative, get on board with new ideas, inspire passion, and spearhead the planning and implementation of the ministry
- Ensure your ideas are clear before you invoke the support of others.
- It may help to focus your work more if you get your team to formulate a vision statement. General your vision statement answer the question of what you are trying to achieve
- Set objectives. This should answer the question of how are you going to reach the goal identified in the vision statement.
- Ask those who you know have a heart for the disabled and enquire whether they would be interested in joining your team.

- Make an announcement in your church for volunteers. You may be unaware that within the membership there might be individuals who are enthusiastic and deeply care about helping to meet the needs of the disabled. This gives them the opportunity to join the team and to use their gifts to enhance this ministry.
- Enlist the support of the church so they can progress the work with you and develop of ministry.
- Engage speakers who are familiar with the issues of making a church accessible. This will be useful in enabling your church to identify and address issues in your church and encourage training on how to be more sensitive and responsive. This will assist people in dealing with their fears about disabilities and more aware of attitudes and prejudices they may have.
- Implement a Special Needs or Disability Awareness day to help raise awareness of the need and necessity of being an inclusive church and DDA compliant
- Get acquainted with local and national organisations that work with people with disabilities.
- These organisations can attend your church and offer relevant training. Under the resources section of this manual there is a list of Christian organisations that have specialist knowledge in relation to making our churches more inclusive.
- Sometimes these organisations are open to visits or being shadowed. Your core team can visit with them or volunteer as a learning experience.
- Actively seek to invite disabled individuals to your church and involve them in the audits and consultations about how inclusive your church is.
- Try to ensure that when individuals with special needs attend your church, there are people ready to meet and welcome them.

# **Engaging the Church Support for Families of Individuals with Disabilities**

## **Get to know the family**

- Get to know everyone in the family and ways that you are able to help them. Especially get to know the person with the disability.
- The more you can see the person the less the disability will cause you to be uncomfortable or unsure of what to say.

## **Help during the church services**

- People with more severe disabilities sometimes require a lot of attention and energy.
- The family may not be able to be able to get anything out of the church services because they are so concerned about their family member.
- A church can have helpers to sit with the person during the service or during Sunday school. This allows the family to better focus on God.

## **Pray and ask for prayer requests**

- Ensure the individual is happy for this and keep confidential information so that public prayers are more general

## **Tips for commencing a respite care programme**

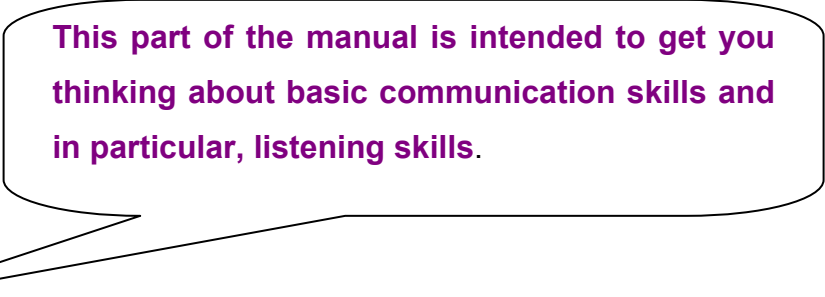
- Have a few volunteers who are willing to be with the person and learn how to handle all their needs. This person would typically need to spend some time with the family to learn how to care for the person with disabilities.
- Start with providing care right in the home.
- Spend an hour or two with the person while the rest of the family can relax, take a nap, do laundry, or something else.
- Then you can progress to having the family members go out for a few hours while a volunteer stays behind to provide for the needs of that person.

- When everyone is comfortable with this, the family could go on a weekend retreat allowing everyone to have some well deserved alone time and relaxation.

# Basic Communication

---

## Introduction



This part of the manual is intended to get you thinking about basic communication skills and in particular, listening skills.

There are a number of methods that people use to communicate with each other but the most vital is **listening**. By honing your listening skills you will increase your ability to understand what is happening around you - it will also increase your own self-awareness.

We have all learned the basics of language simply through listening. Our family members talked to us and we learned their way of communicating with us, just by listening.

As children grow they learn to communicate more clearly using other methods of communication. All of these other methods are learnt to a great degree by listening.

## Listening - A Neglected Art

We spend most of our waking life communicating in some way. On average, half of that communication time is spent in listening. Despite all this, listening is the “poor relation” of COMMUNICATION TRAINING.

We use four basic communication skills throughout our lives, Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. Listening will always be the most vital. Of all of these skills LISTENING is the most used and the least taught.

Good, effective listening skills can, and should, be developed as part of personal development.

### **Good Listening is Intentional Listening**

INTENTIONAL LISTENING means that LISTENING is planned. Time is set aside FOR LISTENING. Everything else is put on hold so that you can devote your attention to, just listening.

As a group of volunteers, working with people who have various kinds of disabilities, their families and carers, you will no doubt be called upon to listen to people dealing with, and sharing feelings. To be able to respond appropriately, a listener should be aware of his or her own feelings. That means being able to LISTEN TO OURSELVES first.

### **Listening to ourselves**

Awareness of our own feelings is very important, the more aware we are of our own feelings - the more comfortable we are about expressing our feelings and listening to and understanding other people's feelings.

God gave each of us a whole range of feelings and emotions. They are part of His gift to us – part of creation. We are all more comfortable; more at ease with some feelings and emotions than we are with others. Feelings and emotions, quite often, need expression and that requires a LISTENER.

When King David talked with God he was very specific about his feelings. He didn't hold back.

“My soul is downcast within me” (feeling depressed?)

“My heart rejoices at your salvation” (I am so happy...)

“Free me from my anguish” (I am really hurting.)

(There are many other such 'feeling-type' statements in the Bible, especially in the Psalms. Read some and try to identify with the emotions expressed.)

If we can listen to what is going on internally, we can be more aware of our own emotional state.

When we LISTEN TO OURSELVES, WE BECOME AWARE of how we are feeling. The more aware we are of our own thoughts and feelings the more likely we are to deal with them; take whatever action is necessary; find resolution to issues. If we cannot listen to ourselves we will not be 'available to listen to others - we will be so busy suppressing our own stuff. That takes a lot of energy.

**Taking care of ourselves – How?**

Each one of us must take responsibility for our emotional well-being. We are constantly considering those around us. Families, friends, work, home we juggle them all – so to take care of ourselves we have to have a strategy in place for those times when life gets tough. Most of us will encounter situations that will throw us off balance from time-to-time. These are the times when coping strategies are very useful tools to have.

Have MINI STRATEGIES and MAJOR STRATEGIES in minds.

Mini strategies could be something very simple: A lovely memory that you can just call up when you need it – and it makes you feel good; something that you have done really well. Carry a photograph in your bag of someone you love and who makes you feel good. Try to connect with the feeling attached to whatever memory you call up. Look at it often, experience the 'good feeling' again.

If you need a little time-out – take it. It will pay dividends.

Know what activity, or place, that helps you to relax completely. Listening to good music is an excellent way to relax. So, stop and listen. *Psalm. 46:10* "Be still and know that I am God."

Identify a place where you can relax so when you need it you can go there. It might just be a place at work where you can escape to for a few minutes; a garden during your lunchtime; a place at home where you can shut the rest of the family out and just be 'you'.

We don't always need solitude to relax. Think about the ways Jesus dealt with his needs. During His teaching ministry he was always surrounded by people – his disciples; the sick; the seekers and the curious, the enemy. He was constantly reaching out to people; healing; teaching; travelling. Jesus was very aware of his needs. He listened to those needs and when he needed to have some R & R he headed for the hills or the desert or he went out in a boat.

There were other times he spent relaxing with good, familiar friends, sharing a meal together, catching up with their news, enjoying their company.

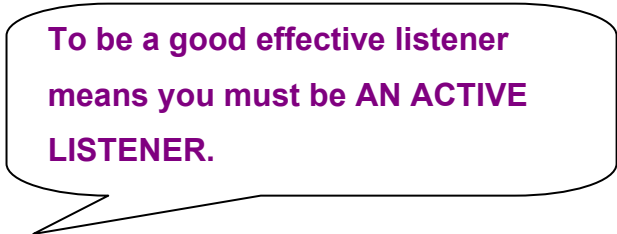
Then there was Gethsemane, when he was alone. Three times he went looking for the support of friends. When Jesus was carrying his heaviest burden needed someone to - just be there, - present! Available! His friends couldn't do anything for him. They couldn't take away his pain; they couldn't 'fix' anything for him. Couldn't give him anything. Jesus knew that – but he still needed the comfort of knowing that his friends were there for him, watching out for him. Available.

(The word 'available' is a good word to use in the context of listening. The dictionary says it means: At one's disposal; at hand; capable of being used.)

When we have learned to listen - attentively - to ourselves and to understand what we have heard – and take care of ourselves - THEN we are ready to listen to others – EFFECTIVELY.

### **Listening and paying attention**

We all need to feel that we are being listened to, heard and understood.



**To be a good effective listener means you must be AN ACTIVE LISTENER.**

That means being 'available' to the person you are listening to. If possible, a time and place should be arranged where it is safe and free from interruption – don't try to squeeze someone in – they deserve more

If you know that you only have a limited amount time to spend with a person – tell them so at the outset so that they can use the time available to their advantage.

### **Listen with empathy**

Empathy is listening with full attention, with respect for the person and an understanding of what that person is experiencing. Listen as if what the person has to say, and how they are feeling are worthy of full consideration. Anything less could be deemed disrespectful.

Almost all distress carries, in its roots, disrespect. Disrespect is something that is at the core of so much pain in this world at present. Disrespect crushes the spirit of those on the receiving end. It can lead to all kinds of destructive emotions and behaviours.

It's easy to share 'good' feelings; 'happy' feelings, the joys and even some of the sorrows in life. But it's not so easy to share those more painful feelings. Feelings of rejection, loneliness, fear, shame; feelings of inadequacy, feelings of not being able to cope with someone or a situation anymore, these feelings are very difficult to share.

If you are listening to someone sharing any of these feelings, how do you think you will cope with them, how will you respond?

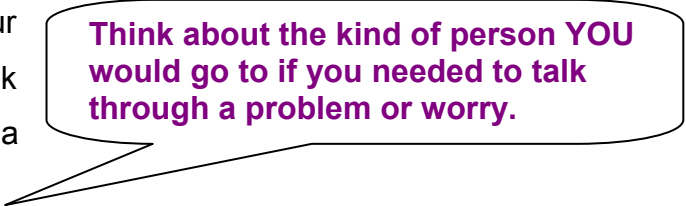
It is important to acknowledge these feelings. Stay with them, discuss how they came about; what, if anything, they would like to change. Whatever a person is feeling at any time is very real to them. Sometimes feelings will change if just left to themselves, but more often, they just simmer away there in the background feeling 'heavy' weighing a person down, causing feelings of depression etc.

When these feelings can be shared with a good listener; someone who demonstrates a willingness to listen to the whole story, then feelings are being recognized, owned, valued, shared. The result: the speaker will feel they have been 'heard'. They will feel valued and included. It is not helpful if a listener, jumps in too quickly with a solution, tries to 'fix' things or, even a denial that there is a problem there.

Often when someone is given the opportunity to just talk about something they have been struggling with; just through hearing themselves say, out loud, what they are worried about, they can see the solution all by themselves. And all you have done is listened.

### **Attitudes of an effective listener**

Attitude is very important in many aspects of communication but especially so in listening. To developing your own listening skills, think seriously about what makes a good listener.



**Think about the kind of person YOU would go to if you needed to talk through a problem or worry.**

What kind of person would you choose? Observe your own and other people's listening habits. Spend a little time making a list of the attributes that would help you to open up to someone and also those that would deter you. Have a really honest look at it again and tick off those attributes, for and against, you find in yourself. Know yourself. Listen to yourself.

By setting aside some time to listen to someone; in a safe place; free from interruptions; adopting an attitude of full respect; you are demonstrating to someone that what they are saying is important; they are important – you will be well on the road to becoming a good, effective, listener.

When a person needs to talk it is usually because they have something going around in their heads and it may be causing distress, worry, indecision, despair, or sheer loneliness. When someone is feeling some, or sometimes all of these feelings, they are also feeling quite powerless. If you can provide an opportunity for someone to give voice to their distress you are giving them a very powerful gift.

Listening is an active skill. You listen attentively; you hear – not just spoken words, but also the unspoken words. Be aware of the other person's body language. You can 'listen' to what they feel as well as what they say. You become aware of the emotions of the speaker. Listen for the 'feeling' words and if you reflect anything back for clarification or to help the telling of something, use their 'feeling' words – the words they use – not your own. Ask questions to show that you are interested or if you need clarification, i.e., "do you mean..." "have I understood this correctly?"

For many situations, simply to be listened to, with interest and attention, is enough.

### **Be aware of your own body language**

Your own body language will have a significant impact on how you hear and on what you feedback to the speaker.

- Be relaxed, open and attentive. This will give the speaker permission to speak more freely.
- If you are bored, that can be reflected in your body language and that feeling can be transferred to your speaker.

### **Eye contact**

Eye contact is a very important part of establishing and showing interest in person-to-person communication.

- Do not stare at the speaker, they will feel intimidated and under scrutiny.
- A friendly glance every now and then will show that you are still interested in the conversation, and therefore interested in the other person.

### **Listen with an open mind**

It is very easy to get distracted by words that trigger negative emotions. By developing your listening skills, you can relate to others and have a deeper understanding if you can remain, and think, objectively.

- Remain objective at all times.
- Don't get drawn into emotional tangles or take sides.

### **Build confidence**

- Respect the confidence of the person you are listening to. Respect their story - the same way you would like your story to be respected.
- Be genuine with people. Someone who needs to be listened to deserves an open and honest response.
- Ask relevant questions but curb curiosity.
- Encourage the person to be specific, but again, curb curiosity.
- Give them permission to say what they need to say.
- Give them time to say what they want to say.
- Don't be tempted to fill gaps or silences, the speaker needs to find their own words and time to think and reflect on what is taking place.
- Use appropriate encouraging words and phrases.
- Don't change the topic of conversation - this is your speaker's time.

### **Set boundaries and keep them**

- Set your own boundaries regarding time available to listen.
- Be aware of the passing of time without checking every few minutes.
- Let the speaker know when you have about 10-15 left so that the conversation can be concluded in a 'good place'.

## **Personal sharing**

Share your own personal information with caution. The other person may not be interested in your story – only their own. If you try to use some experience of your own – even as an analogy, it may not be well received. This could leave you feeling deflated, embarrassed and could bring to the surface some unexpected feeling. If this happens and you find yourself struggling with some emotions of your own, you are no longer ‘available’. You may have had similar experiences as your speaker, but this is not the time or place to air them. Everyone’s experiences are different – they may experience similar situations in a very different way.

Listening is a gift of time and caring that you give to someone else. It is a powerful gift.

## **Action:**

### **Answer the following questions:**

1. Are you an active listener?
2. Would you like YOU to listen to your needs and concerns?
3. Are there good listeners in your church community?
4. Can you use their skills to enhance your work?

## Summary Points to Remember

- Pay attention to the speaker
- Be actively interested in what a person is saying
- Don't try to do something else while listening.
- Be relaxed and at ease during pauses.
- Don't interrupt too much.
- Don't pre-judge the subject – it's important to someone and you may learn a lot from it.
- Be aware of the speaker's body language, are they tense, agitated, lethargic, nervous. Are they avoiding eye contact?
- Don't dwell on the speaker's mannerisms, accent, way of speech – they are not important. What you hear is important.
- What you are hearing is someone else's story, give respect and empathy. Don't try to take their problems away – they are not yours.
- Don't get over-involved with the emotions of the speaker it's the quickest way to lose concentration and control of a situation.
- Don't allow emotionally charged words to arouse personal anger.
- Be encouraging and non judgmental.
- Show acceptance and understanding.
- *Always* be gender appropriate.
- *Always* be age appropriate

# Resources

---

## Adventist Special Needs Association



### ASNA Mission Statement

**To support people living with special needs and disabilities**

ASNA is a registered charity (launched in 2001 by parents, carers and people with disabilities) aimed at supporting people living with disabilities and special needs.

ASNA also works to empower people interested in the spiritual, physical, emotional and social welfare of adults and children with special needs and disabilities by providing training and awareness workshops and other educational projects.

### **What do we do?**

ASNA Provides R.E.S.T: Resources, Education, Support and Training in the field of disability and special needs.

### **Resources**

We provide access to a large database of resources to support the work of professionals working in the disability field.

We provide advice on issues related to special educational needs, disability benefits, disabilities ministries and a range of specific disabilities.

We also provide information on IT, books and other literature relevant to specific disabilities and special need.

### **Education, Training & Awareness**

We provide disability training workshops, seminars and courses.

We provide consultancy in disability awareness and programme development.

We provide resources and information to increase and support disability awareness.

### **Support**

Many families living with disabilities and special needs have limited access to leisure and social facilities. This is mainly due to the lack of adequate access to services and the poor attitudes of staff providing these services. There are over 6 million carers in the UK (Carers UK). Research carried out by the Princess Royal Trust for Carers identified that over 50% of carers find their responsibility stressful and would 'walk away'. The aim of the residential respite holidays and short breaks is to provide an opportunity for families with disability to access services that help them deal with the challenges of caring.

### **ASNA events & projects**

- Family respite days and weekends – **CONNECT BREAKS & HOLIDAYS**
- Young Carer summer holidays and support network - **BRIGHT FUTURES**
- Support Groups for carers and disabled people – **CONNECTING PEOPLE**
- Training and awareness workshops, conferences and seminars in disabilities and special needs – **OPEN CHURCH PROGRAM**
- Deaf awareness training - **HANDS**
- Fundraising concert where people with disabilities are empowered to present their talents and skills - **STEPS**

### **How can you help?**

**You can support the work of the charity by:**

- organising events in your local community to raise funds for ASNA.

- becoming a partner / member
- sending donations to ASNA to support our work.
- volunteering to support ASNA family events and respite care.

**Supporters and Sponsors** – ASNA is managed by a board of trustees who volunteer their time and skills. Projects are made possible by the contribution of volunteers trained by ASNA and financed by ADRA UK.

ASNA projects are sponsored by ADRA UK, South England conference, membership subscriptions, donations and fundraising.



CONNECT BREAKS AND HOLIDAYS  
Family Respite and Volunteer training event -



CONNECT BREAK  
Family fun day



BRIGHT FUTURES -  
Young Carer week long  
residential holiday.

## **Organisations and services**

### **Adventist Special Needs Association (ASNA)**

65 St Helens Avenue, Benson, Oxfordshire,  
OX10 6RU

Tel: 01491 833 395

email: [asna@special1.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:asna@special1.fsnet.co.uk)

web site [www.asna.info](http://www.asna.info)

Reg Charity No: 1100447

### **BUILD (Baptist Union Initiative with People with Learning Disabilities)**

12 Barford Crescent, Kings Norton, Birmingham,  
B38 0BH

Tel: 0121 433 5417

### **Christian Deaf Link UK**

CDL UK, First Floor, 69 High Street, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 7EJ

### **Deaf Christian Network (Hands Together)**

PO Box 212, Doncaster, South Yorkshire,  
DN2 5XA

Tel: 01302 369684 (Voice/Minicom)

Fax: 01302 739660

email: [handstogether@deafcn.freemove.co.uk](mailto:handstogether@deafcn.freemove.co.uk)

web site: [www.handstogether.org.uk](http://www.handstogether.org.uk)

National Resource Centre. It can provide ministry videos in sign language for people who are deaf.

### **Disability Network**

Whitefield House, 186 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BT

Tel: 0207 207 2135

Fax: 0207 207 2150

email: [rvalerio@eauk.org](mailto:rvalerio@eauk.org)

An Evangelical Alliance network working with Christian disability organizations to effect change in the Church and society.

### **Disabled Christians Fellowship**

(Address and Fax: see Through the Roof, p.44)

Tel: 01372 749955

email: [jenny@throughtheroof.org](mailto:jenny@throughtheroof.org)

Network of Christian fellowship groups, which also provides accessible holidays.

### **Hard of Hearing Christian Fellowship**

PO Box 91, Reading, RG1 5YR

Tel: 01189 872166

Fellowship for hard-of-hearing Christians. Advises churches on pastoral care and loop/equipment.

### **Lightwing Projects**

91 Park Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO31 7NE

Tel: 01983 882428

email: [Braille@cfan.org.uk](mailto:Braille@cfan.org.uk)

web site: [www.lightwing-projects.org](http://www.lightwing-projects.org)

Produces Christian books and magazines in Braille by computer.

PO Box 351, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4XQ

Tel: 0118 950 8781

Fax: 0118 939 1683

email: [info@prospects.org.uk](mailto:info@prospects.org.uk)

web site: [www.prospects.org.uk](http://www.prospects.org.uk)

### **Scripture Union**

207-209 Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK2 2EB

Tel: 01908 856000

Fax: 01908 856111

email: [info@scriptureunion.org.uk](mailto:info@scriptureunion.org.uk)

web site: [www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk)

### **Special Needs Camp**

Mrs Joy Bussey, 2 Shakespeare Street, Watford,  
WD24 5HF

Tel: 01923 461 044

email: [js.bussey@ntlworld.com](mailto:js.bussey@ntlworld.com)

### **Through the Roof**

PO Box 353, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5WS

Tel: 01372 749 955

Minicom: 01372 737 041

Helpline: 01372 737 042

Fax: 01372 737 040

email: [info@throughtheroof.org](mailto:info@throughtheroof.org)

web site: [www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org)

Provides disability resources for the UK Christian community. Equips and advises churches.

### **Torch Trust for the Blind**

Torch House, Hallaton, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 8UJ

Tel: 01858 555301

Fax: 01858 555371

email: [info@torchtrust.org](mailto:info@torchtrust.org)

web site: [www.torchtrust.org](http://www.torchtrust.org)

Provides resources for blind and visually impaired people. Literature in Braille, giant print and cassettes. Fellowship and holidays.

### **Prospects ... access to life**

69 Honey End Lane, Reading, Berks, RG30 4EL

Tel: 0118 950 8781

Fax: 0118 939 1683

Email: [info@prospects.org.uk](mailto:info@prospects.org.uk)

Web site [www.prospects.org.uk](http://www.prospects.org.uk)

Prospects is a Christian voluntary organisation which values and supports people with learning disabilities so that they live their lives to the full. Prospects supports people to live as independently as possible and develop a wide range of skills.

**Another Way** – a telephone network for families with children with additional needs.

Call Another Way today if:

- you feel alone and misunderstood
- you want to speak with someone who really understands
- you want to hear how others have coped
- you want to say the 'unsayable' things to someone

- you don't know anybody else in the same situation as your family

If you would like to talk to someone who understands your situation, please call **(029) 2081 0800** and we will put you in touch with one of our befrienders. Befrienders are not counsellors, but will informally share from their own personal experience of being part of a family where someone has additional needs.

### **Joni & Friends** – International Disabilities Centre

Founded by Joni Eareckson Tada to communicate the gospel and equip churches to evangelize and disciple people affected by disabilities. A wide range of materials are available online, covering issues, books and resources.

### **The Shaftsbury Society**

The Shaftsbury Society is a leading UK Christian charity that works with disabled people and local communities to achieve social inclusion, empowerment and justice. The Society works in the areas of education, adult support and regeneration.

### **DISABLED PARENTS:**

**Supported Parenting.** Supported Parenting is the website of Sheffield university's 'Parents with Learning Difficulties' research programme.

Here you will find research information, guidance for professionals and useful publications. Contact: [www.supported-parenting.com](http://www.supported-parenting.com)

**The Disabled Parents Network.** The Disabled Parents Network is a national organisation of and for disabled people who are parents, or who hope to become parents, and their families, friends and supporters. It is a small organization, run by volunteers, with no paid staff. It offers a Helpline and a Support Worker who

helps parents to access support and services to which they are entitled, will write letters on their behalf, and attend important meetings with them. There are area 'contacts' in most areas.

The Disabled Parents Network is based at the **National Centre For Disabled Parents**, which is a resource centre offering books, magazines, reports, information sheets, audio and video tapes on disability, pregnancy and parenthood. Small items of baby care equipment are available to try out. The Centre will also advise and support professionals who are working with disabled parents.

National Centre for Disabled Parents/Disabled Parents Network

Unit F9

89/93 Fonthill Road

London, N4 3JH

Tel: 0800 018 4730

Textphone: 0800 018 9949

[www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk)

## Useful Sources of Information

Further information on **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995** can be obtained from:

**DRC,  
Freepost MID02164,  
Stratford-upon-Avon,  
CV37 9BR.**

Tel: 08457 622 633

Textphone: 08457 622 644

Fax: 08457 778 878

email: [enquiry@dcr-gb.org](mailto:enquiry@dcr-gb.org),

web site: [www.disability.gov.uk](http://www.disability.gov.uk)

***The Disability Rights Commission Code of Practice on rights of access, facilities, services and premises (price £13.95, ISBN 01170 2860 6)*** is available from the Stationery Office:

Tel: 0870 600 5522

DRC web site: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

**Roofbreaker Guides: Simple and practical advice on how to make your church welcoming to disabled people (at little or no cost!)**

<http://www.throughtheroof.org/downloads/downloads.html#rbg>

then click on Roofbreaker Guides

This is a wonderful website offering practical advice on how to make people with disabilities feel welcome. There is a section for each major type of disability and also guidelines for church stewards.

## **Accessibility :**

**Dancing with Disabilities** by Brett Webb-Mitchell (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1996)

This book is a must read for everyone! It raises the joys, the hardships, frustrations, triumphs of people with disabilities in the church. Some sections of this book may the reader what to shout with frustration and anger at some of the ways churches can treat people with disabilities. Other sections show how great the church can be at accommodating everyone.

This is a great book for a church wanting to start being fully inclusive of people with disabilities. If your church has a core group of people desiring to lead the church in being more inclusive, this would be a good book to start seeing the issues and struggles of the church in regards to disability.

This book may be ordered through <http://www.christianbook.com> or by calling 1-800-CHRISTIAN (1-800-247-4784) Stock Number WW9811524

**Unexpected Guests at God's Banquet: Welcoming People with Disabilities Into the Church** by Brett Webb-Mitchell (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994)

This practical book challenges congregations to be more inclusive. It explains why this should be done along with how, where, and in what ways.

**Different Members, One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God's Family** edited by Sharon Kutz-Mellem (Louisville, KY: Witherspoon Press, 1998)

This is a practical handbook for churches that gives a lot of information to change the barriers that keep people with disabilities from being fully included in the church.

It is available through the Presbyterian Distribution Service at (toll free) 1-800-524-2612. It can also be ordered online at [www.pcusa.org/marketplace/index.jsp](http://www.pcusa.org/marketplace/index.jsp)

Item #097300,

Item #097301 Audiotape edition

Item #097302 Braille edition

**Disability Etiquette – Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities** by Judy Cohen

This is another online resource that gives very helpful tips for interacting with people with disabilities. Each section includes great cartoon illustrations that show both an improper way to act and a proper way to act.

<http://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf>

**Books for Children and adults:**

**You are Special** by Max Lucado (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997)

While this book is meant for children, it should be read by all. In this book, a young man learns that he is special because he has been made his creator and that he should not be worried about what others think of him.

**Human Disability and the Service of God** edited by Nancy Eiesland and Don Saliers (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998)

This book has various contributors who discuss raise the textual, theological, practical, and cultural issues when the church is fully accommodating of all people with disabilities. The fourteen contributors to this book offer a view of what it truly means to serve God.

**That All May Worship** by the National Organization of Disabilities.

This book is a very helpful resource for churches just starting to learn about accommodating all people in the church. It is for all faiths and addresses language, leadership, and litany. Suggestions are provided for adapting the service for different disabilities.

This also includes *An Audit of Barriers* which is a check list that allows the church to access how accessible they are. It includes attitude barriers, physical barriers, and more.

These may be ordered online at

[http://www.nod.org/resources/PDFs/rel\\_ordrfrm.pdf](http://www.nod.org/resources/PDFs/rel_ordrfrm.pdf)

**Creating an Inclusive Worship Community: Accommodating All People at God's Table** by Elizabeth Browne (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004)

Creating an inclusive worship community starts with awareness. Elizabeth Browne shares a panel discussion held within a church led by people with disabilities. Interlaced with stories of these lives there are also suggestions for accommodations for different disabilities.

**Personal Stories:**

**In the Name of Jesus** by Henri Nouwen (New York, NY: Crossroad/Faith & Formation, 1993)

In 1983 Father Henri Nouwen moved into the L'Arche community in Toronto. This was a place where individuals with and without disabilities live alongside one another. In this book (one of the forty he wrote in his life time), Nouwen is invited to speak in Washington DC regarding the community he lives in. He brings along a resident of the community, Bill, who asks to address the crowd. The book gives incredible lessons on Christian leadership.

**The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey** by Henri Nouwen (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988).

This is another book by Nouwen who spent part of his life living with people with disabilities in L'Arche and Daybreak communities. This book is about his struggles during this time and also the great truths he learned.

**Joni** by Joni Eareckson Tada (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

Joni was a young woman of seventeen when a diving accident left her paralyzed from the neck down. This is her story of her accident, and first few years as a quadriplegic. In the book, the reader walks along with Joni as she begins to truly examine her faith and see that God is still working her life.

**Nobody Nowhere** by Donna Williams (New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks, 1994)

Donna Williams grew up in rural Australia in the 1960's, where the word autism was not even heard of. In this book, Donna struggles with a family not

understanding her differences, and trying to find out how she will fit in with society.

**Moving Violations: War Zones, Wheelchairs, and Declarations of Independence** by John Hockenberry (New York, NY: Hyperion, 1996)

This autobiography of John Hockenberry is a very real look at the life of a person who is in a wheelchair. Becoming paralyzed in college he recounts his joys, struggles, pains, and humor throughout his life. This book provides a very real look at just how human everyone is and how our society sometimes tries to take away that humanity.

**Looking After Louis** by Lesley Ely and Polly Dunbar (Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 2004)

For 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grades this book is about a little girl who sits next to a boy, Louis, who has autism in her class. Throughout the book the girl begins to understand why Louis sometimes follows different rules, but is still the same as any of the other kids in the classroom. This is a good book to help children accept other children who may act a little differently from them.

**Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair** by Jamee Riggio Heelan (Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, 2000)

This book is for children ages 4-8. It is a true story about Taylor who has cerebral palsy. In the book we see some of the activities that Taylor does. We learn that Taylor enjoys the same things as other children. This book is another good one to help children to see the similarities instead of differences between themselves and others. It also shows a little bit of the frustration that is felt by some people with disabilities helping the children increase understanding.

**Web resources:**

**Resource Packet on Disability, Spirituality, and Healing** by Rev. Nancy Lane, Ph.D. (New York, NY: The Center on Human Policy at Syracuse University, 1999)

This online resource is a must see for any church leaders. Rev. Lane has many resources available that come from her own experience with disability and her many years of educating others. In the Handout section you can find articles on the aesthetics of accessibility, counseling people with disabilities and their families, the fears that people with disabilities may have towards those without disabilities, accepting disability, the ways the church can help, the grief cycle, forgiving God, spiritual abuse, healing, and theological questions.

One can also find on this website a wonderful annotated bibliography which includes books which address abuse and disability, addiction, biblical studies, depression and spirituality, feminism and disability, general disability studies, grief, healing, ministry, spirituality and disability, studies in theodicy, the problem of suffering, and theology.

This can be found at: <http://thechp.syr.edu/spirituality.html>

or by contacting: The Center on Human Policy, Syracuse University 805 South Crouse Avenue Syracuse, NY 13244-2280 .

# The Law and Disability

---

**REQUIREMENTS of the  
The Disability Discrimination Act 1995  
and  
The Disability Rights Commission Act 1999 – DRC Code of Practice**

**In relation to Churches in the BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE**

## **Legislation and Good Practice**

Churches are aware of legislation in relation to health and safety, food preparation and hygiene, and child protection but many are not aware of legislation concerning the rights of children and adults with disabilities, namely **The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995** and **The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) Act 1999**.

The DDA 1995 gives people with disabilities certain rights in the areas of employment, buying and renting land or property. It also, under part III of the Act, makes it unlawful for providers of goods, facilities or services to discriminate against people with disabilities. The Church is a service provider; it doesn't matter for the purpose of the Act that the Church provides a service free of charge.

Under the DRC Act 1999 the Disability Rights Commission was established, with similar investigative and enforcement powers to the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality.

NB By 'services' the DDA means the facilities and activities the church provides. It does not refer only to church services of worship.

## **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Your Church**

The duties of The Disability Discrimination Act have been introduced in three stages:

**Since December 1996** it has been unlawful for churches to treat children and adults with disabilities less favourably for a reason related to their disability.

**Since October 1999** churches, under Section 21 of the DDA, have had to make 'reasonable adjustments' for people with disabilities, such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provide services. The 'adjustments' the Act requires are to policies, practices and procedures which could exclude people with disabilities.

**Since October 2004** churches will have had to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical features of the premises to overcome barriers which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to have access to the building or service.

The extent to which it is reasonable for a church or church-based activity to undertake changes requiring expenditure depends on its size, resources and its particular circumstances.

The Act is imprecise as to what is reasonable and it is likely that future case law will determine this. Churches may find, particularly those using listed buildings, that they are complying with the law in that the expenditure required for changes to the building can seem prohibitive and would not be regarded as reasonable, due to the excessive cost. In looking at what is reasonable the church should ask: What message does that give to the individual with a disability? Do we reject because of cost?

Churches should look at making 'reasonable adjustments' now and not wait until someone with special needs comes into the church building, only to find that the church is not able to meet their needs.

## **The Disability Rights Commission Act 1999 - DRC Code of Practice**

The DRC has issued a Code of Practice. In this it states that the duty of service providers to make reasonable adjustments 'is a cornerstone of the Act and requires service providers to take positive steps to make their services accessible to disabled people. This goes beyond simply avoiding treating disabled people less favourably for a disability-related reason.'

The Code of Practice states that churches should endeavour to enact the following:

- Change practices, policies or procedures which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with a disability to use the service.
- Overcome the physical features which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with a disability to use the service, by providing the service with a reasonable alternative method.
- Provide auxiliary aids or services which would make it easier for or enable people with a disability to use a service

### ***Practices, Policies and Procedures***

Churches should review all their policies and procedures and alter any which may be regarded as restrictive for anyone with special needs.

### ***Physical Features***

Physical features can include steps, stairways, kerbs, exterior surfaces, paving, parking areas, building entrances and exits, internal doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, lifts, etc. Where a physical feature is a barrier, churches should look to finding a reasonable alternative and, for example, change the Sabbath school room from the first floor to the ground floor, if accessibility is an issue.

### ***Auxiliary Aids***

Churches could consider providing information on cassette, installing a loop system, or employing the service of a sign language interpreter.

### ***Duties of the Church Council/ Leadership Team and Minister***

- The church council or management team needs to be aware of its obligation under the DDA
- Each church council or leadership team should arrange to discuss the issues raised by the DDA, so that they are aware of the wider range of disabling conditions which are found in the community.
- The council or leadership team needs to inform the church members and community users of their buildings and facilities that it is illegal to discriminate against disabled people.
- The council or leadership team should conduct an audit of the church's facilities and draw up a strategy to ensure that the church is open to everyone. The audit should address both physical and non-physical barriers to access for people with disabilities and special needs.
- Once the audit has been completed they should consult with an architect to see how any necessary changes can be made and how to fit them in with the ongoing maintenance of the church.
- The church council or leadership team could start with Through the Roof's 'Churches for All' scheme which will be able to assist churches in their task of maintaining the church buildings while meeting with requirements of the Act. There may also be denominational resources available; with the Church of England, for example, the Council for the Care of Churches can advise.
- The church council or leadership team should contact the Access Officer at the local council, or speak with local associations of disabled people, to discuss the building's accessibility.
- The church council or leadership team should then install appropriate equipment and make any necessary changes to accommodate the different special needs of the individuals attending.
- Members of the church council or leadership team should receive disability awareness training.

- The church council or leadership team should have regular reviews of their services to ensure that they are accessible to people with disabilities.
- The church council or leadership team should ensure that disabled individuals and those with other special needs are aware of any new provisions; for example, that there are signs at the church entrance and on notice boards, and that all publicity and advertising clearly states what provision is made.
- In planning any new buildings, ensure that they meet the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations which covers access for disabled people.

### **The Whole Church Benefits**

In responding to the requirements of the DDA we can help individuals with special needs feel part of the church family. Others too will benefit from making our churches more open and accessible including:

- Individuals of all ages with disabilities and special needs
- Parents or carers with young children in push chairs and buggies
- Women in the latter stages of pregnancy
- Older adults

Those in our congregations who have an illness or a temporary impairment, for example someone who has broken a leg or had surgery

### **Further DDA Definitions**

- physical impairment – this includes weakening or adverse change of a part of the body caused through illness, by accident or from birth.
- For example, amongst many other situations, *blindness, deafness, heart disease, the paralysis of a limb or severe disfigurement.*
- mental impairment – this can include learning disabilities and all recognised mental illnesses.
- substantial - this does not have to be severe, but is more than minor or trivial.
- long-term adverse effect – that has lasted or is likely to last more than 12 months.

- a normal day-to-day activity – that is, one that affects one of the following: your mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects; speech, hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or perception of the risk of physical danger. It does not include the ability to work because no particular form of work is 'normal' for most people.

APPENDIX B

# AUDIT SHEET

DOES YOUR CHURCH HAVE:	YES	NO	COMMENT
▪ access to all areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ ramps or lifts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ handrails?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ seating for individuals who use wheelchairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ a loop system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ adequate PA systems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ signed services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ adequate lighting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ printed materials available in large print, Braille, or other formats such as tapes or CDs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ printed sermons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ taped sermons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ an accessible toilet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ reserved parking spaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
▪ transport available for individuals with disabilities or special needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## APPENDIX C

# UK Statistics

- There are an estimated 10 million disabled people in Britain<sup>2</sup>
- 44% of adults over the age of 50 have a disability<sup>3</sup>
- There are 770,000 disabled children under the age of 16 in the UK, which equates to 5% of all under 16s<sup>4</sup>
- About 985,000 people in England have a learning disability (about 2% of the population). 796,000 of them are aged 20 or over<sup>5</sup>
- There are 55,000-75,000 children with a moderate or severe learning disability in England<sup>6</sup>
- There are an estimated 210,000 people with severe and profound learning disabilities in England: around 65,000 children and young people, 120,000 adults of working age and 25,000 older people<sup>7</sup>
- Only 20% of adults with learning disabilities are known to learning disability services<sup>8</sup>
- There are over 6.8 million disabled people of working age which represents 19% of the working population<sup>9</sup>
- At 31 March 2003, over 157,000 people were registered blind<sup>10</sup>
- More than 70% of people in the UK are aware of the DDA, compared to only 40% in 1996 (a year after the Act was introduced)<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Disability Rights Commission: *Disability in Scotland 2004: Key Facts and Figures 2005*

<sup>3</sup> Economic & Social Data Service: *Quarterly Labour Force Survey, June-August 2005*

<sup>4</sup> Contact A Family: *Unique Child Trust Fund Advice for Disabled Children, August 2006*

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Health Research, Lancaster University: *Estimating Future Need/Demand for Support for Adults with Learning Disabilities in England, 2004*

<sup>6</sup> Department of Health: *Learning Disabilities: Facts & Figures* (accessed on line 2007)

<sup>7</sup> Department of Health: *Valuing People*

<sup>8</sup> National Statistics & NHS Health & Social Care Information Centre: *Note to Adults with Learning Difficulties in England 2003/4*

<sup>9</sup> Economic & Social Data Service: *Quarterly Labour Force Survey, June-August 2005*

<sup>10</sup> National Statistics, Department of Health, Personal Social Services CSSR Statistics: *Registered Blind & Partially Sighted People England, Year Ending 31 March 2003 (December 2003)*

<sup>11</sup> Disability Module of the Office for National Statistics

- The annual spending power of disabled adults in Britain covered by the DDA is estimated at £80 billion per year<sup>12</sup>
- It is estimated that there are about 9.8 million people in the UK with some form of disability – one in seven of the population. At the last count, in 1996, there were 750,000 wheelchair users in the UK. In 2002-03, 19 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women reported having hearing difficulties, and in 2004 55,000 people were registered as deaf. In 2003, 157,000 people were registered as blind. In terms of hidden disabilities, there are about 1.8 million diabetics in the UK and over 350,000 people with epilepsy, for example<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Disability Rights Commission: *Disability in Scotland 2004 – Key Facts & Figures* (2005)

<sup>13</sup> Disability Rights Commission: *Disability in Scotland 2004 – Key Facts & Figures* (2005)