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Cathedrals are beautiful historic buildings and living places of worship. They should be open to, and able to be enjoyed by all.

Cathedral Chapters have a responsibility, both as Christian places of worship and under the Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable provision for access, including identifying and dealing with any obstacle to accessing your cathedral and its precincts.

We can help to support you through this process.

Download our guidance

- [Access work in cathedrals](#) (283.51 KB)

Southwark Cathedral

Where to begin?

Step one: carry out an access audit

Put together an accurate picture of access issues and needs in your cathedral and its precinct.

Step two: develop an access policy

Provide a framework for delivering managed solutions to access issues (e.g. installing new access equipment).

Review and update your policy on a regular basis.

Step three: make sure all your policies and plans are consistent

Your proposals to carry out access works or to install new access equipment should be consistent with your cathedral's:

- Liturgical plan
- Conservation management plan

Remember:

Many types of works at your cathedral will have an access and accessibility dimension, even if that is not their focus (e.g. new lighting, reordering, or toilets).

You need to fully consider the access dimension of such works.

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Develop your proposal

A named member of chapter should manage proposals to carry out access works or to install new access equipment.

The proposals should be developed in close discussion with the cathedral architect and archaeologist to make sure the impact of the work is understood and any necessary mitigation measures are incorporated from an early stage.

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What permissions do you need?

For permanent additions (e.g. ramps or stair lifts)

Installing new access equipment might be thought of as a permanent addition under the Measure.

It requires the approval of your Fabric Advisory Committee.

For permanent alterations (e.g. digging a pit for a platform lift)

Works that involve permanent alterations to the cathedral's fabric or archaeological remains require an application to the Commission

For installations that will last for less than twelve months

Installations that will last for less than twelve months and do not affect the fabric of the cathedral do not require formal approval under the Measure.

You should nonetheless seek the advice of your Fabric Advisory Committee.

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What do we look for in your application?

The Commission and your Fabric Advisory Committee will assess your proposal based on its material effect on the architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic character of the cathedral.

This includes:

- Its physical impact on the fabric and archaeological remains
- Its visual impact on the character of the building

Clearly set out how the visual impact and any archaeological impact will be mitigated.

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Supporting information for your application

Include the following supporting information with your application to the Commission or your Fabric Advisory Committee:

- An introductory statement by chapter with background information and putting the work in context
- A statement of the need for the work
- Reference to the cathedral's access policy
- Reference to the cathedral's [liturgical plan](#) and [conservation management plan](#)
- A description of the proposed work
- Illustrative material (e.g. drawings, photographs, etc.)
- Relevant technical information (e.g. equipment specifications, fixings, finishes, etc.)
- Impact statements by the cathedral architect and archaeologist

Find out more about preparing [applications](#)

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Want more help?

Widening the Eye of the Needle

Read our advice on access to church buildings for disabled people

Easy access to historic buildings

Make it a reality

Easy access to historic landscapes

Make sure everyone has a meaningful experience

The Equality Act 2010

Get your quick start guide from the Home Office

Equalities and Human Rights Commission

Advice and guidance

Accessibility in church buildings

Making your building accessible to everyone

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/cathedral-fabric-commission/advice-and-guidance-cathedrals/access-works>