

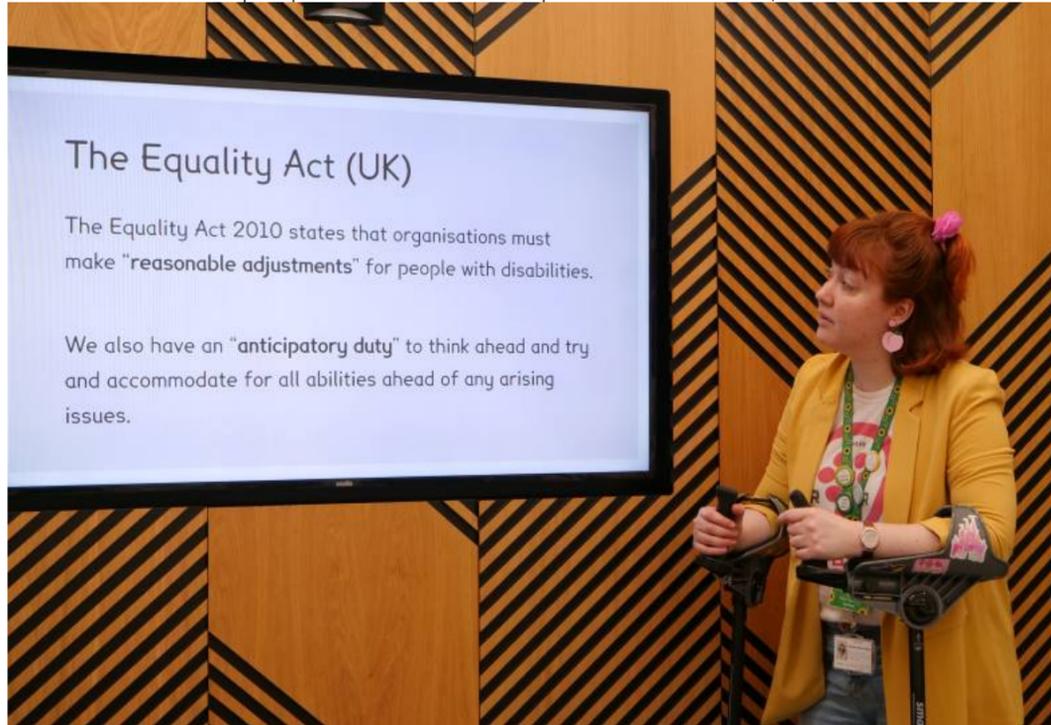
A girl with down's syndrome blessing Archbishop Justin with her arms raised above him as he sits on a chair.

Working together to ensure Deaf and Disabled people are full members of the church.

Barrier-Free Belonging

scroll down

Deaf and disabled people are an essential part of the Church, and the Church of England is committed to ensuring the welcome, inclusion, and participation of all



the Church of England includes disability as one of the key areas in which it

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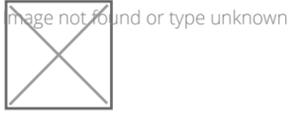
Many of the people who put together these pages have lived experience of disability and are involved either nationally or at a local level. Did you know that there is a network of disability advisers who work in the Dioceses of the Church of England to train, advise and encourage the Church to become more aware, accessible, and inclusive of those with disabilities? Some are trained auditors and give advice when a Church wishes to change its buildings and do so to ensure that the building will be accessible for disabled people.

Access is not just a matter of ramps and buildings though, it's about challenging the negative assumptions and attitudes that disabled people often face, and showing that disability is not about deficiency but diversity.

There are lots of national groups who focus on the work of the Church on disability. The Deaf Ministry Task Group brings together those people who are involved in ministry. CMDDP's work with the Deaf community is carried out, largely, by the Deaf Ministry Task Group (DMTG). This is a small group that draws together Deaf and hearing people with expertise and experience in Deaf Ministry. All are fluent or native BSL users. The work may involve research, making information available, and monitoring the situation with regard to Deaf ministry across the Church of England and making recommendations. The group is facilitated by Gill Behenna, the National Deaf Ministry Adviser, who also acts as contact for this group.

Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred language belong to a community with a rich and varied culture. Their worship, liturgy, teaching, and evangelism is all carried out in BSL. In many parts of the country there are active Deaf Churches and a national organisation, Deaf Anglicans Together, (DAT) keeps in touch with Deaf Christians across the UK. DAT also sends three representatives to the General Synod.

Many Deaf Christians who use BSL attend both their local church, with BSL/English interpreters, and their own Deaf Church where they can worship in their own language.



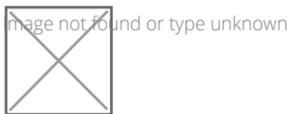
"Deaf people, especially those who rely on and use British Sign Language, are catalysts of communal enrichment within the Church: increased visual accessibility, visual images, Sign Language in worship, communication, friendship and most of all acceptance of such diversity."

Penny Beschizza – Deaf Church Lay Leader, BSL Tutor, campaigner and activist

The Disability Task Group is focused on disability issues and is chaired by the Bishop Richard Atkinson, who is the lead Bishop on Deaf and disability issues. It focusses on the way the Church relates to disabled people in terms of encouraging them to fulfil their calling, training them for ordained or lay ministry, and providing resources. Many of the issues faced are complex, so the diversity of this group is important. The group also has an external focus, because it's important that the Church engages with what is going on in wider society. The Church needs to both learn from and challenge the world on disability, whether it's dealing with discrimination and the failure to protect vulnerable people, or celebrating the achievements of disabled people in society.

Once a year these two groups come together to discuss things that relate to both Deaf and disabled people. When meeting together they are called the Committee for the Ministry of and among Deaf and Disabled People, or CMDDP.

In the past few years there have been some notable events run by CMDDP, in particular two conferences: one on disability in 2018, and the other on mental health in 2019. Both were held at Lambeth Palace and hosted by the Archbishop Justin Welby.



"They will have stuff that you don't know, God will reveal himself to them, God will use them and bless them to gift you. And I don't mean that at all in a patronising way, I mean that in a real way, in a Christian brother and sister kind of way, they will teach you and bless you and will demonstrate stuff about God that you won't know because you're different. Everybody's different."

Emma's mum, Helen

One focus of future work will be the Archbishops' Commission on Reimagining Care. This commission will look more deeply at issues raised by disability and other issues such as ageing, both within the church and in wider society. It was launched in April 2021 and is due to report in December 2022.

There are different language choices to use when it comes to talking about disability. On this page you'll see a range, to honour the fact that people have different preferences and perspectives. If you're interested in learning more about the language use surround disability then have a look at [Roy McCloughry and Krista Ewert's paper on Disability Language and Diversity](#).

Further information

[Justin Welby being blessed by a child with Down's Syndrome](#)

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Down's syndrome toolkit

The toolkit is to help you welcome people with Down's syndrome



Mental Health resources

Resources and information to help support good mental health

A person writing on paper on a desk.

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Resources

Looking for something special? Why not look at these resources?

[Disability & the church podcast logo](#)

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Disability & the church podcast

A podcast aiming to equip us to be inclusive and welcoming to all.

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What is God's plan for you?

Every Christian has a vocation. What is God's plan for you?

The main group in the Church of England which focuses on disability is the Committee for the Ministry of and among Deaf and Disabled People (CMDDP). It is composed of people from all kinds of backgrounds, some disabled and some not, who discuss the issues that face us today. It is chaired by the Bishop of Bedford, Richard Atkinson who also chairs the main sub-group on disability, the Disability Task Group. Another sub-group deals with Deaf issues. Their meeting is conducted in British Sign Language (BSL). This is facilitated by the National Deaf Advisor, Gill Behenna. At present there is no National Disability Adviser. For any inquiry regarding disability please use the form to contact Malcolm Brown, Director of Mission and Public Affairs who is the contact person on disability. Use the form below to contact Malcolm or Gill.

- Current Start
- Preview
- Complete

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Indicates required field

Name

Email Address

Who would you like to contact?

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Message

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