

We have been working to improve the Church of England and Archbishops' websites, primarily for those who are disabled or living with a disability.

Find out more about the accessibility audit of the Church of England's websites by reading [Improving accessibility across the Church of England website platform](#).

Here, we speak to the group of testers involved in the accessibility project.

What do you think of the Church of England's work on making platforms accessible?

John - The CofE should be making efforts to make things accessible, as the Lord welcomes all, whether we can see or not. If the church doesn't make efforts to be equally welcoming and inclusive she is failing in her duty.

John B - Reassured to know that access is being taken seriously.

Sarah - What I see so far are small steps in the right direction in some areas, but there is a long way to go and a lot of prejudice and attitudes that need challenging. Around 20 per cent of the population is disabled, and that figure does not always appear to be reflected in church congregations nor in leadership roles. The body of Christ includes everyone, we are all precious and important and we all need to feel that we are truly welcome. This won't happen until accessibility and disability rights are fully embedded in CofE culture and ethos.

What did you think of being asked to take part in the audit?

Sarah - Being asked to contribute was very encouraging for me. It is vital that disabled people are involved at every step of the process of designing accessible spaces.

Mike - I regarded it as an honour and a pleasure.

What were your main takeaways or learnings from the testing session?

John B - Probably that the C of E website is a bit more accessible than I had previously thought.

What was the most interesting part about being involved in this project?

Jane - The most interesting part was being given a scenario and asked to use the website from that point of view: e.g. a young non-churchgoer who would like to have their child baptised and doesn't know much about the church. I'm a churchgoer, don't have children, and sadly am not so young anymore! Normally I tend to use websites to find out what I want or need in my own situation (I imagine most of us do). This flagged up

some new accessibility questions, in addition to those I'd already discovered in my own use of the site.

Lorna - One thing I love about the web testing is that I usually learn something with each test I do, as well as hopefully helping developers learn to. Each website is unique and will present its own features and challenges.

How did you find taking part?

John - The researcher was patient, and easy to build up a rapport with so that I could answer honestly and with confidence that she would listen to what I had to say. She gave me time to tell my story, and make it clear that I spoke from my experience. There are commonalities with those with sight loss, but at the same time, there are individualities, and I made it clear I did not presume to speak on behalf of others, but merely from my own experience. I must have talked a lot as we overran our time slot.

Mike - Enjoyable and challenging.

Ellie - I found taking part in the testing session a really interesting process, both as a user and as someone with experience in coding websites. Putting myself in another person's shoes (e.g. using the website as someone looking for lay preaching materials) made me think about the range of potential users for a website with such a broad audience, and the challenges of balancing their needs in the design process. Although there were some challenges in accessing some material using my assistive technology, the audit was an enjoyable and educational experience using a website which I would not normally visit.

The testers

Jane is a Counselling Psychologist, currently employed by the [Diocese of Norwich](#) as their Diocesan Counsellor and Adviser in Pastoral Care. She is a regular user of the Church of England website to find information for her work and has been an active member of the Church since childhood. Jane is visually impaired due to albinism and is registered disabled.

John became partially sighted at the age of 63 following a sudden and unwelcome brain haemorrhage four [years ago](#). He is learning to accommodate his new sensory state but has not become resigned to being impeded by obstacles that can be removed or overcome. He welcomes the work of the Church of England Digital Communications team to test out and improve the web presence so that people with reduced vision can still benefit from the content. The Royal National Institute of Blind People [says there are 3 million people with sight loss or dyslexia](#). What is the point of a menu of fine food and drink if that many people cannot read it and select a meal?

Sarah lives in Bristol and is neurodivergent with autism and ADHD with an interesting array of MH conditions as well as ME/CFS. She is a member of [YouBelong](#) and has gravitated towards a hybrid approach of online fellowship and irregular physical church attendance as she often finds the latter difficult to cope with. She is a member of the Bristol Diocesan Disability Theology and Advisory Groups and is currently co-organising autism acceptance and understanding training with the Diocesan Disability Adviser.

Mike has been totally blind since birth. He worked as a physiotherapist until 2013 and has had to use computers since 1984. He is a Churchwarden and is also involved with the charity [Technology Association of Visually Impaired People](#). He is also involved with the digital outreach in his local church.

John B was registered as blind in 1988 and has Retinitis Pigmentosa. He has used assistive technology since 1990 both at theological college and through his 27 years of parish ministry. John has recently taken up the role of Diocesan Disability Ministry Enabler for [the Diocese of London](#). He will be working to improve inclusion for people with disabilities across all areas of the life and ministry of the church in London.

Ellie is a part-time Collections and Archives Assistant from East Yorkshire, currently studying for her MSc in Digital Heritage with a focus on sensory experiences in museums. She has multiple disabilities and uses assistive technology including a screen reader.

Lorna has worked for two sight loss charities and is registered blind herself. She works as a life coach and mentor to vision impaired young people and their families. She lives in Brighton with her wonderful guide dog and is involved in several musical projects in her spare time. Website testing is something Lorna feels passionate about as everyone should be able to access the internet equally and this requires developers and testers to work together.

Disability is not limited by each individual.



[Read further details about our web accessibility audit](#)



[Read our updated accessibility statement](#)

For further information about this and any other related projects, please email website@churchofengland.org.

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