



neurodivergent people in the Church.

The Church of England has awarded £2.4 million to fund a series of measures aimed at boosting the participation of Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people in parish life, from encouraging vocations to the priesthood to grants for improved access to buildings.

Under plans over the next three years, the funds will back projects including lay and ordained vocations events and leadership programmes among Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people and guidance to churches on more accessible signage.

The schemes will be developed and managed by the Church of England's Disability and Deaf Ministry Task Groups. The Groups include Deaf and disabled people as well as those whose neurodivergence or mental health difficulties mean they experience marginalisation and exclusion within



A pilot scheme is planned for seven dioceses for café style spaces in churches, in partnership with mental health professionals and the charity Renew Wellbeing, aimed at providing welcoming spaces to help support emotional and mental well-being.

Another pilot will also be developed in the Church of England's Northern Province providing 20 grants of up to £50,000 for projects that include physical changes to buildings that improve access.

There will be a further 100 grants of up to £5,000 for projects in the same pilot scheme that enhance access and participation or enable work with disabled people and other target groups.

Other plans include:

- Supporting and resourcing mental health chaplains
- Strengthening Deaf ministry across the church
- Supporting current ministers and chaplains working in the Deaf community

The award comes after funding was made available for leadership training for disabled clergy and a conference for diocesan disability advisers.

The Bishop of Bedford, Richard Atkinson, who is Chair of the Committee for the Ministry of and amongst Deaf and Disabled People, said: "As we declare that 'we are the body of Christ,' we need to ensure that every part of the body is able to fully belong and participate and bring their unique gifts to our worship and ministry.

"At the present time we are not fully inclusive and many disabled people find that they encounter barriers to full belonging and participation.

"This funding will help the church advance the journey towards equality and justice for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people and release many as yet unrecognised gifts that will enrich the church we are and the church we are becoming."

Rev Preb John Beauchamp, Diocesan Disability Ministry Enabler in London, and a member of the Disability Task Group, said: "All people, including Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people, are fearfully and wonderfully made and reflect the image of God in the church and the world.

"As a blind person who has fulfilled 30 years of ordained ministry, I am encouraged by this funding and the signs of cultural shift that it indicates."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "I welcome this funding as part of overdue action by the Church of England towards ensuring the full participation of our Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent sisters and brothers in Christ.

"Everyone should have the opportunity to take part in the life of the Church. Without the insights and the gifts of disabled, Deaf and



Christ.”

The award has been made by the Archbishops’ Council and comes from a £1.2 billion fund announced by the Church Commissioners to be distributed between 2023 and 2025 for mission and ministry in the Church of England.

**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/church-england-awards-ps24-million-boost-participation-deaf-disabled-and>