

The Church of England is committed to removing the barriers that Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people face within the church. We want all people to be able to fully belong and participate in the life, mission and ministry of the church and we want all people to be able to flourish and grow as disciples and ministers, regardless of any physical, sensory or cognitive difference.

In the 2022 summer General Synod session, a motion was passed reaffirming this commitment. [Read full motion and Synod debate.](#)

'This Synod, affirming disabled people (with hidden as well as visible disabilities) to be fearfully and wonderfully made in the image and likeness of God, and mindful of the progress already made in removing some of the barriers which disabled people, clergy and lay, face; commit to working towards the removal of all remaining barriers to full participation for disabled people in the life and ministry of the church.'

General Synod 2022

To support this ambition in 2024, the Archbishop's Council have committed £2.4m to projects that will help churches become more accessible and welcoming and enable Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people to explore vocation and grow in the church's ministry and leadership.

Initiatives include:

- Developing a national scheme for disability signage
- Working with Renew Wellbeing to establish pilot wellbeing spaces in seven dioceses
- A Pilot grants scheme for parishes to apply for funding to provide facilities and/or resources to support Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent inclusion and belonging
- A leadership development programme for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent clergy and lay ministers
- A training event for Deaf chaplains and ministers
- A specialist network training event for mental health advisers
- Two vocations weeks with events to promote Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent lay and ordained vocations
- Developing online resourcing and communication initiatives

[Read full press release for more information.](#)

The Rt Rev Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford and the Church of England's lead bishop for the ministry of and amongst Deaf and disabled people, responded to the announcement:

“I rejoice in the rich contribution that Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people make to the life and ministry of the church. This funding comes as a welcome recognition of the work that many people do to improve access and inclusion across the church. 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.”

The Rt Rev Richard Atkinson

In April 2024, Helen James was appointed Project Manager for this work. As she took on this important role, Helen said,

“I am so looking forward to joining the Faith and Public Life team in this new role of Disability Project Manager. The Disability Project is an ambitious and truly exciting programme, and I am certain it will bless our church communities and make a positive difference to people's lives. It is a tremendous privilege to be called to manage delivery of this vital work.”



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