

Appendix E

A guide to working with those with disabilities: communication and etiquette

Language

Appropriate use of language is less to do with 'political correctness' but more to do with challenging negative stereotypes and incorrect assumptions about people with disabilities. Often people with disabilities have identified a vocabulary that they feel comfortable with and efforts should be made to accommodate this. People should take care not to address a companion or carer as a conversational go-between or talk in childish language.

Listed below are words and phrases that are not helpful with acceptable alternatives:

Unhelpful words / phrases	Helpful words / phrases
Physically challenged, differently abled, cripple, invalid, handicapped. Handicapped has its origins in 'cap in hand', with implications of charity and begging. Invalid can be interpreted as 'not-valid'.	Person with disability
Mentally retarded, mentally handicapped, intellectually challenged.	Person with a learning disability
Deaf aid	Hearing aid
Deaf and dumb	Profoundly deaf, without speech
Disabled toilet	Accessible toilet, wheelchair-accessible toilet
Victim of disability or 'the disabled'- this is impersonal and implies a group separate from the rest of society.	A person with disability
Suffering from, afflicted by.	A person with...
An arthritic, spastic or epileptic.	A person with arthritis, a person who has cerebral palsy or epilepsy
Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair.	Wheelchair user

Consider that the use of euphemisms, irony and jokes for some people with disabilities can be misunderstood and the true meaning may not be grasped, or it may be felt to be offensive.

Visual impairment

Below are some guidelines that will help someone with a visual impairment to feel welcome and included:

Identify yourself by name when you meet someone with a visual impairment.

Reserve seats as near to or at the front of any gathering, so the partially sighted person has the option to sit closer to what's going on. Offer to assist someone who is blind to find his or her way around. Don't push – always allow them to take your arm and, if necessary, provide space for a guide dog to lie down.

As far as possible, make sure that all corridors, approaches and circulating areas are free from obstructions.

Ensure large print paper versions are available for songs and other written material as well as audio recordings of talks.

All print for partially sighted people should be in typefaces such as Arial, Univers and New Century Schoolbook. These are all good examples of clear and legible typefaces. Avoid simulated handwriting and ornate typefaces as these can be difficult to read. No single size is suitable for everyone, but most people prefer their large print in the range of 16 to 22 point, but this may need to be checked with the person using the material. Printing should be on contrasting colour paper (black on white, or black on pale yellow is best) and on matt (non-glossy) paper. This also helps people with dyslexia. Don't use pale coloured type on dark colours or print over photographs. Photocopied acetates make excellent large-print song sheets

It is better not to use hand-written OHP acetates, and if this is unavoidable, it is important not to use all capital letters as it's much harder to read. The size of words on the screen will depend on the size of the venue and position of the OHP/digital projector, but all users should prepare acetates/ projector material to an agreed minimum.

For safety reasons, good lighting is essential for partially sighted people (Deaf people benefit too, as lip-reading is only possible in good lighting).

Use colour contrast as much as possible to designate entrances/exits.

The international symbol should be shown on literature, advertisements and notice boards to indicate what facilities are provided for blind and partially sighted people:



Hearing impairments

Below are guidelines that will help those with a hearing impairment feel welcome and included:

Always address the deaf or hard of hearing person direct, not the person who may have accompanied them.

Make sure that your face and mouth can be seen clearly. Look directly at the person and speak at a normal speed and volume with clear lip patterns. Avoid exaggerated lip patterns that are harder to read. Keep your hands away from your face and remember eating whilst talking hinders effective lip reading. Don't speak directly into the person's ear.

A hearing induction loop should be provided for talks, entertainment, etc, whether you are aware of people using hearing aids or not. It is not always obvious someone has a hearing aid and most people do not like to draw attention to the fact.

If possible, someone should be conveying what is said and sung using British Sign Language (BSL). They should stand in a visible, well-lit place (probably the front). Courses are now readily available for training in BSL, including distance learning. As many people as possible should be trained so that this responsibility doesn't rest on one person's shoulders.

Be aware that background noise can make life very difficult for people who use a hearing aid because it often distorts the sounds they are trying to hear.

Be prepared to write things down if necessary, particularly if communication is difficult. The important thing is not to give up.

The international symbol should be shown on literature, advertisements and notice boards to indicate facilities are provided for the hard-of-hearing.

Speech impairment

Never finish a sentence or word for a person with speech impairment. It is also important not to get agitated or become impatient when you are waiting for words to be said. In this situation retain your interest in the person, perhaps by nodding affirmingly and/or retaining eye contact.

Impaired mobility

If possible, mark out reserved parking spaces for those with mobility difficulties as near as possible to the building entrance. Reserve seating that is the most accessible and minimises walking, but remember that it is up to the person to decide where they want to sit. Always enquire if they would like assistance before you help.

Wheelchair Users:

All internal and external access needs to be level or ramped.

Don't designate one area for wheelchair users - this unnecessarily draws attention to their disability.

Make sure that at least one seat is alongside each wheelchair position for a friend to be able to sit with a wheelchair user.

When talking to a wheelchair user, it is polite to sit down so that you are on the same level, making eye contact easier.

Remember that a wheelchair is part of the user's personal space, so don't lean on it, hold it or attempt to move it/push it unless asked.

The international symbol should be shown on literature, advertisements and notice boards to indicate facilities are provided for people with impaired mobility. Please see:

www.visitbritain.com/en/Accommodation/Disabled-and-elderly/National-Accessible-Scheme-symbols.htm

Learning disabilities

Adults and children with learning disabilities often experience difficulties dealing with life issues and/or adjusting to new situations. The term 'learning disability' is often used in a general way that, because of people's preconceptions, isn't always helpful. For example, it can include people with conditions like Dyslexia or Asperger's syndrome, where intellectual capacity is unhindered or maybe exceeds the general average, but may affect social skills and the ability to communicate effectively.

Equally none of these 'givens' may apply, which underlines the importance of not making assumptions about people that are known to have a learning disability and not treating them in a childish or patronising way. Below are some guidelines that will help those in this situation feel understood, valued and supported:

- adults with learning disabilities may have limited or no reading ability so where possible, signpost facilities and directions (e.g. fire exit) using images as well as words
- read out written material and, if applicable, include songs with repetitive or uncomplicated words
- offer assistance if people are experiencing difficulties understanding or need help with certain instructions. Keep all communication of information in 'bite-size chunks', taking extra time if necessary to explain. Make explanations clear, concise and uncomplicated
- be patient if individuals are noisy or move about when it seems inappropriate and/or don't immediately pick up on the 'norms' of how things are done within the church