

## Welcoming and Involving People with Disabilities

Many churches have taken action over the years to make sure that their buildings and services are more accessible to people with a range of abilities and disabilities. Ramps, accessible toilets, large print booklets, T loop systems, all contribute to helping many people participate in our services and projects. But there is much more that can be done, and sometimes even the provision that has been made isn't quite what it could be. Accessible toilets that are used as storage space or T loops that are not switched on can make life for many people that bit more difficult than it needs to be.

What else could your church be doing? There is some very good advice available and there are people in the Diocese who have experience of these issues and can provide support in your local setting.

We often think that making a church accessible is about adapting buildings. It is about more than that. We need also to take into account the needs of those who live with hidden disabilities (for example those who live with chronic pain or some mental health problems). They may be overlooked.

A group of people in the Dorchester area have put together a booklet with advice on including people with disabilities based on their experience. This could be a useful discussion starter in a small group or could be adapted to suit your parish.

The national organisation Through The Roof is a Christian disability charity that changes the lives of disabled people around the world and helps others to change lives too. Through The Roof wants to see everyone valued equally, fully belong, and able to contribute their gifts and skills. Their resources can help you do an audit of the access issues in your building and services.

Disability and Jesus campaigns and writes from the perspective of people with disabilities who are involved in church life. Their perspective can be challenging when we think that we have already done all that we can and it is well worth spending time reading their material.

Social Justice Programme Manager,  
Colin Brady,  
[colin.brady@salisbury.anglican.org](mailto:colin.brady@salisbury.anglican.org)  
Twitter: @SJPSalisbury  
Facebook: Colin SJP Salisbury

