

Disability Advisers Newsletter 1 Winter 2009

Dear Colleagues

As you can see at last we have the first Disability Advisers Newsletter hot off the presses!! We will be relying on you to send me items for future newsletters and I am hoping this will be a good way to make the sharing of information around the dioceses easier.

Disability Advisers Newsletter is a bit of a mouthful, so we would like you to come up with a name for the newsletter which will catch the idea of what we want to do with it. Whoever comes up with the best idea will receive a personal letter from me commending them for their efforts!! *Phil Maddock*

Regional Day Conferences Arrangements for regional day conferences for disability advisers are now being made for the North (provisional date: 2nd March 2010), South West and South East regions. Full details will be advertised once they are finalised. It is hoped that the regional conferences and regular newsletters will provide greater support and networking for disability advisers.

'Foursight for the Church' Visit the Torch Trust website www.torch-foursight.org for more information about ensuring people with sight loss are included within the life of our churches. Register online and you will receive a 'Foursight' church pack. The General Disabilities Issues Panel (GDIP) members are intending to visit the Torch Trust centre in Market Harborough early in 2010 for a tour of their excellent facilities, and will see if it may be possible to organise a visit for disability advisers at a later date.

Book Review

'A Painful Gift' – The Journey of a Soul with Autism, by Christopher Goodchild (Darton, Longman & Todd – London 2009 ISBN 978-0-232-52758-2)

This book gives a profound and fascinating insight into the world of someone who has autism. I found it extremely moving and informative as the author struggles to cope with the challenge of living in a world largely ignorant of Autism. His faith clearly plays an important part in his struggle to 'connect deeply' with the world around him. It is well written and a compelling read and I hope that you will get as much from it as I have. *Phil Maddock*

Next Edition The next Newsletter will be produced in Spring 2010.

Contributions and suggestions of topics to be included by 1st March please to Philip Maddock

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Valuing Difference and Diversity

Planning an event? Use a good practice checklist

Gail Robinson, Disability Adviser for Chester Diocese, has contributed this useful checklist developed for the 'It worked for us' resource pack to help take account of the needs of older people and people with a disability when planning events.

Travel and Parking

- Adequate directions to the venue and parking are provided
- How close is the venue to public transport?
- Safe access across roads to premises
- Adequate parking for able bodied and Blue Badge holders
- Reserved parking for Blue Badge holders Access into and out of the venue
- Is the venue wheelchair accessible?
- Have people been told beforehand about steps, ramp, lifts, upstairs, fire exits etc

The room to be used

- Adequate lighting
- Induction loop
- Appropriate size and lay out of room
- Appropriate number and design of chairs
- Heating - is it adequate for the people coming to the event?

Facilities

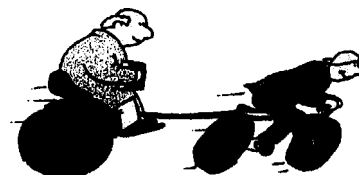
- Toilets & cloakroom area - are they wheelchair accessible?

Literature/handouts

- Large print versions available (establish the need for these in initial booking forms)
- When writing the leaflet/literature, use plain English and use a non-serif font with headings in Arial bold, two sizes larger than the body of text, not capitals or italics

Using OHP or Power point

- Prepare large print handouts (18 Arial) if someone can't see screen
- Arrange clear view line to screen for everyone
- Use yellow on blue or black on white for text, not red
- Ensure equipment leads and cables are safely placed and covered



Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Make sure that there is an induction loop that works
- Make sure that all speakers use microphones
- Speaker needs to repeat any questions asked from the floor so that people switched to the loop will be included
- Offer signer and/or lip speaker
- Send notes/worship materials in advance to signing communicator

Timing of the event

- Elderly or disabled people would probably not attend if the event starts too early in the morning or is in the evening in the middle of winter and involves travelling

Refreshments

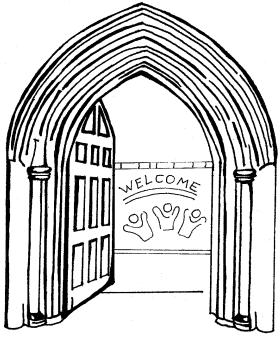
- Are decaffeinated tea/coffee, fruit teas and water available?
- Wheat free biscuits (if requested on booking form)
- Packet of straws and straight sided mugs may be needed by a disabled person
- If serving lunch, check what equipment is needed by people with a disability

Other things to consider

- If the event includes communion, are there wheat free wafers for coeliacs?
- Provide a water bowl if any one of the five sorts of assistance dogs are to be present
- Is the content of the event and worship appropriate?
- Is there someone with the role of identifying anyone needing support?
- Is there support available or follow up offered to vulnerable people?

Summary of information to include in disabled friendly literature

- Is the venue wheelchair accessible?
- Blue badge parking available
- Induction loops available
- The service will be signed
- Details are available in large print (18), very large print (24) or Braille (to be ordered)
- A wheelchair available at the venue? (So that a disabled person might save loading their own in and out of a vehicle and enable them to accept a lift.)
- Are there any additional needs which you would like us to be aware of or any other facilities which we could provide for you?
- Could you offer a lift to another person attending the event?



Opening the Doors

Ministry with people with learning disabilities and people on the autistic spectrum

The General Synod at its meeting in July 2009 commended to dioceses and parishes the guidelines contained in “Opening the Doors” on best practice for the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in the life and work of the Church.

There is an introductory DVD and a 68 page book of guidelines. The Archbishop of York in the foreword to the book describes it as an invitation to the church to walk on holy ground. He says that many of the stories and experiences found in the book show the profound revelation of God’s grace in Christ that true strength and wisdom is to be found in what many would describe as weakness and foolishness. In attempting to define learning disability the guidelines refer to the social model of disability and introduce the slogan “Nothing about us without us.” The document includes many stories about real people who have learning disabilities including some sections where they speak for themselves about their experience of the church.

There is a section on theology which makes the point that people with a learning disability, along with all human beings, are made in the image of God. They, like everybody else, are capable of having a relationship with God, of revealing something of God to others and are entitled to be treated with dignity and understanding. People with learning disabilities are not to be seen simply as objects of charity, not to be patronised and helped out of pity but to be accepted as partners, as fellow members of the body of Christ and as such to be given an opportunity to discover and exercise their gifts within the church.

A large part of the guidelines offers practical advice. There is a section on supporting families with young children with learning disabilities and including them in the life and activities of the church. There is a section on preparation for confirmation and admission to communion. Some advice and practical help is offered on preparing couples with learning disabilities for marriage and there is a section on bereavement and funerals. There is quite a large section on including people with learning disabilities in the everyday life of the parish. Two people who are themselves on the autistic spectrum contribute material on helping church members have some insight into the world of a person with autism and offer ten simple things that can make life easier for autistic people in church. A young woman with autism also appears on the DVD explaining how hard it can be sometimes for her to encounter other people on her way into church. There is a section on support for parents and another on appropriate language. There is a large resource section which includes information about specialist groups and helpful organisations as well as useful websites and publications.

Copies of the guidelines and DVD are available price £7.50 from:
Ministry Division, Church House, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3AZ
Cheques payable to the ‘Archbishops’ Council’ please