



DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

## **Diocesan Policy on PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

full policy to be drafted

The Diocese is committed to full implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995):

'As a fully-inclusive community, the Catholic Church should in all ways be an example of 'best practice' regarding our welcome of people with disabilities of any kind. This is not simply a matter of fulfilling our legal obligations under the 'Disability Discrimination Act' (1995), but of being truly catholic in the breadth of our inclusiveness.' (*Diocesan Pastoral Plan*, p. 16)

- (1) **Each parish should have one or two representatives** responsible for ensuring the full implementation of the Disability Implementation Act (1995) and of working towards a parish community which is fully inclusive of people with disabilities.
- (2) **Every parish needs to carry out a full audit of its facilities and activities with a view to enhancing access for people with disabilities.** Useful materials were provided to all parishes after our diocesan disability study in March 2004.
- (3) **Parishes are required by law to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make their liturgy and community life accessible to people with disabilities.** This includes necessary alterations to physical features (e.g. ramps and wider doorways for wheelchair users; suitable toilet facilities; providing additional help; adapting existing parish services and catechetical programmes).
- (4) **Our liturgy must be celebrated in such a way that people with disabilities are included as fully as possible.** This includes practical steps such as ensuring that a good loop-system is installed; provision of large-print, Braille and taped newsletters etc; use of signing when possible; provision of suitable spaces for wheelchairs; clear marking of steps and uneven surfaces; providing suitable transport to Mass. The question to ask is: what are the barriers which prevent people with disabilities from full active involvement in our parish life and worship? We must then do all we can to remove those barriers. The first people to ask are the experts: ask people in your parish with disabilities to tell you what they need.
- (5) **Our forms of ministry should be open to people with disabilities.** For example, can we provide a microphone for a reader in a wheelchair? Do we invite people in wheelchairs or with learning difficulties to bring up the offertory gifts, to minister Holy Communion, to serve at the altar? For example, what is there to stop a person with Downs Syndrome from being an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?
- (6) **Our catechetical programmes, parish social life, youth activities and every other aspect of parish life must be as fully inclusive as possible.**