

Disability Access Audit – a guide to begin the conversation before a Site visit

Definition of disability

The definition of “disability” (which includes mental health challenges) in the Equality Act is much broader than we often think:

“a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

Please note that this document gives general guidance regarding physical accessibility, and is designed to assist the conversation around Disabled access to and within our church buildings.

A small group should collaborate on working through these areas – rather than leaving it to one person. The group could comprise people with lived experience of disability; people with leadership responsibility for different areas of church life, and the incumbent or minister.

Church building:

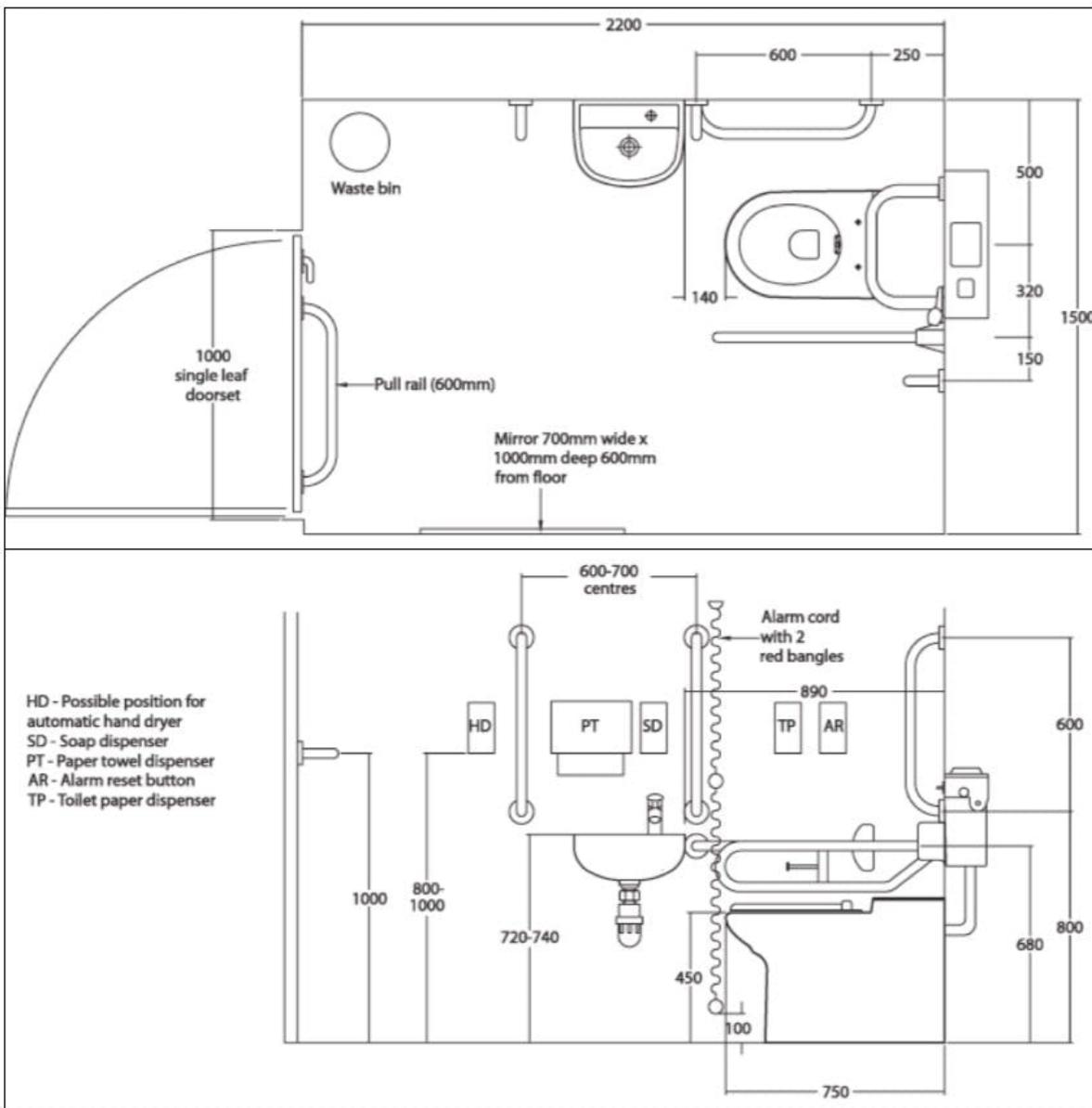
Date:

Who has been part of this Audit:

1	Introduction: reason for this Audit
2	Purpose: what do we hope to achieve from this Audit
3	Describe this church /parish in general: the community, the congregation(s), and church user groups
4	Current issues / concerns / projects: what have you noticed, what plans do you have

5	Finding your church: eg how does someone know where your building is, can it be seen from the roadside, are there clear directions on your website/in a parish magazine...
6	Car parking: eg what provision is there for people who come by car/bike/motorbike, how do they get from there to the main door...
7	Notice boards and signage: is there a main noticeboard, can it be seen clearly, is the information up to date, are there contact details for the leadership and safeguarding officer...
8	Approach to the church: can you describe the main path/access to the building, is it lit, is there a slope and/or steps, what are the surfaces under foot made of...
9	Entrance: can the main door be seen clearly, are there steps/slopes/handrails, does it allow easy access for wheelchairs/push chairs/ assistance dogs, are there people/welcomers present at every service/event...
10	Lighting: what lighting does the building have (external and internal), are there any missing patches, are the bulbs in good order (no flickering/ buzzing)...
11	Hearing loop: does the building have a hearing loop (T-loop), does it work(!) does it cover the whole worship space...

12	Seating & flooring: do you have fixed or moveable seating, where would a wheelchair/powerchair user sit, are the seats on a raised section or flush with the floor level, what surfaces are on the floor (flagstones, wood, carpet etc)...
13	Moving around inside the building: are there any 'pinch points' where traffic flow slows down, are there floor level changes, steps into the Vestry, could a wheelchair user access the Altar, font, lectern, pulpit...
14	Printed and screen-based materials: during services do you use books/handouts/screens, how do these include people with sight loss, do you have large print available...
15	Toilets: do you have toilets, where are they, are there signs to show where they are, how are they accessed, is there a 'disabled' toilet, are there baby-change facilities...
16	Kitchen: how is the kitchen accessed, where is it located, how are people served refreshments...
17	Church hall and other related buildings: have you done a similar audit on your other buildings, what needs improving/amending/upgrading...



Disabled toilet floorplan looking down from above

Disabled toilet floorplan looking through from the side

Image from <https://www.moreability.co.uk/help-advice/2018/08/disabled-toilet-size>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/barrier-free-belonging>

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For legislation and guidance around ramps: [Wheelchair Ramps Regulations - UK Building regulations regarding ramps Disabled Access Regulations DDA Compliant Ramps \(wheelchair-ramps.co.uk\)](https://www.wheelchair-ramps.co.uk)

*Source acknowledgement does not indicate company endorsement