

Quick Guide...

Access for All

Prepared by the Committee on Church Art and Architecture

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in both the workplace and wider society and replaces previous anti-discrimination legislation with a single Act.

It is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has an opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Act covers all forms of discrimination and is about making activities accessible to all types of people and with all types of disability.

Duties under the Act are placed on service providers, which include churches and the services they provide for worship and wider activities within churches and church halls.

Churches need to take reasonable steps to change practice, policy or procedure to make their services accessible to as many people as possible.

Welcoming People to Your Church

Increasing access is central to the church's mission of bringing people closer to God. Jesus showed no discrimination and included all in the sharing of his love. Welcoming people into our church is what we all do; however, we need to be aware of the differing needs of our congregations and try to anticipate ways of meeting them. We would all wish to be treated kindly, whatever our abilities.

It is good practice to produce an access statement with information about what type of services you provide and how suitable your building is for people with a wide range of needs. This should be widely available so that people know what to expect.

Physical Access

It is important to be as inclusive as possible and make reasonable provision for people with a wide range of abilities. Many of our church buildings are listed as buildings of special architectural character and this will need to be considered when assessing what changes would be considered reasonable in the terms of the Act. CARTA is here to help you with this.

We suggest that the first stage is to consider undertaking an access audit.

Questions which you might ask

- The approach to the church –do you have adequate and accessible car parking provision, and are the paths to the church well-lit and with appropriate surfaces?
- Is there easy access to the main door, and can this be used by all? If you utilise a side door, is this clearly marked?
- Is there anything about the interior of the building that hinders participation?
- Are the access routes clear for all?
- Do you have adequate and appropriately located toilet facilities? Are these clearly identified?
- Are there appropriately located spaces for people with access issues –this may well be applicable to a wide range of people.
- Is there adequate access to the chancel to allow full participation by all in worship?
- Is the heating and lighting adequate?

- Are the floor surfaces safe and with sufficient contrast from other surfaces and furnishings to avoid confusion?
- Is there provision of audio and visual systems which allow for wider participation –this could include the provision of an audio loop, large print books, or provision for live streaming of services.
- Are there other questions which are specific to your circumstances?

Design of New Buildings

Many of the inherent issues with altering an existing building can be dealt with by careful consideration through the initial design process. This is an opportunity to design a sanctuary and other facilities that meet modern worship needs.

Members of the committee have a wide range of experience, and have seen many churches that have used design to facilitate access for all.

How Can CARTA Help?

Once you have ideas about what you would like to achieve, committee members can visit and provide advice and share examples of best practice they have seen elsewhere.

How to Contact Us

Anyone wishing to contact the committee should complete a general application form, which can be found on our website www.resourcingmission.org.uk/carta/about and send it by [email](mailto:) in the first instance to the General Trustees.

Alternatively you can telephone 0131 225 5722 and ask to speak to a CARTA staff member.

CARTA Quick Guides

CARTA produces a wide range of guidance notes which complement information in this guide. They can be found on our website <https://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/quick-guides/worship-places>

Other Information

You can find the Equality Act 2010 at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

About the Author

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Scottish Charity Number SC011353