

Quick Guide...

Access for All

Prepared by the Committee on Church Art and Architecture

How welcoming are you? Can I join in?

In 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act brought awareness of the needs of disabled people to a point for action. In 2010 this Act was updated and more general and stringent requirements enacted in respect of disabled access, and the needs of those with disabilities (see below).

Many church buildings have been changed in order to allow access and improve participation. More so, attention must be given to open access in the design of new buildings.

Jesus showed no discrimination of race, gender or feature and included all in the sharing of his love. It is His call that we do likewise. Increasing access is central to the church's mission of bringing people closer to God.

Disability can be obvious, but often is less so. It takes many forms and many are too complex for all but the medical profession to understand. Nevertheless we can be aware of the specific needs that we in our congregation meet on a daily basis in our places of worship and try to deal with that.

The Disability Discrimination Act (replaced by the Equality Act 2010) is somewhat vague on what specific actions are required for individual buildings. Fortunately there are other publications that will assist:

- The Equality Act 2010 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>) gives an explanation of the legal requirements.
- CARTA Publication 'Open Church' is a comprehensive guide which gives general advice from the Church's perspective.
- The CARTA Audit document is a useful tool to apply when considering your building's needs.

- CARTA has a comprehensive list of instances of physical changes made to church buildings.
- The Scottish Building Regulations (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards/publications/pubtech>) details the physical requirements for ramps and stairs. Speak to your local Building Control Department for advice on your requirements for a building warrant application.

All CARTA publications and leaflets are available on the Resourcing Mission website:
www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/carta.

CARTA will be pleased to discuss any proposal or issue with you. You can find our contact details on the reverse of this Quick Guide.

Here is something of a checklist as a starting point – further issues could be explored with a visit from one of our CARTA committee members.

- Does anything about our building hinder participation from anyone with any kind of disability?
- How can our parking and access to the building from the car park be improved?
- Is the approach from the car park to the building a long marathon?
- Can access lighting be improved?
- Easy access through the main (not the rear) entrance?
- Easy access throughout the building?
- Are cloak rooms and toilets easily found?
- Do we use large print notices and large print hymn books?
- Are spaces for wheelchairs and friends in good spots?
- Is there appropriate chancel access and are the colours clearly visible?

- Do we use non-trip floors?
- Do we have a good sound system/loop?
- Is there adequate heating?
- Are the aisles wide enough?
- What other questions would be helpful for us to ask?

We would stress that offering inclusive access often can be a simple thing – remove a few pews, clear out corridors, lower posters – and can often be done subtly and aesthetically.

We all hope to get older and we hope that we can be kindly treated if we develop impairments or disabilities ourselves.

How can CARTA help you?

- Help you see good examples of what is done elsewhere.
- Explain how to find and use an architect.
- Help with how to progress applications for change.
- Explain how to make best use of Presbytery and the General Trustees.
- Provide guidance on Local Authority approvals process.
- Provide guidance on Historic Scotland.

Whom to Contact

Anyone wishing to contact the Committee should complete an enquiry form which can be found on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/carta) and email it to: carta@cofscotland.org.uk.

Alternatively, you can telephone 0131 225 5722 and ask to speak to someone in the CARTA office.

CARTA Quick Guides

Other Quick Guides include advice on lighting, audio visual, stained glass and communion ware. These can be found on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/quick-guides).

About the Author

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Scottish Charity Number SC011353