**Diocesan Disability Team: Strategy 2020**

![In royal blue is written 'Loving [ful stop]'
In green - 'Living [full stop]'
In red - 'Learning [full stop]']()

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Introduction

‘A staggering two-thirds of the British public (67%) admit that they feel uncomfortable talking to disabled people…

Nearly half of the British public (43%) do not personally know anyone who is disabled’[[1]](#footnote-1)

(Scope, 2014)

In 2018, a sub group was established to develop a Disability Strategy. This highlighted the need for a clearer definition of the aims of the Disability Team, greater clarity about the role of Parish Disability Representatives, and the importance of local training.

This work has now been brought in line with the Diocesan Strategy which was approved in March 2019.

As Christians, we believe in the equality of all people (Galatians 3:28), that we are all made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that the Holy Spirit imparts gifts to all (1 Corinthians 12) and as such, all should be given the opportunity to be included, belong and participate in the life of the church whatever their ability.

Given the context outlined above by the charity Scope, it is vital that the Disability Team is able to engage with people of all abilities throughout the diocese to assist in building stronger, more connected, less isolated and more diverse congregations. By improving these dynamic partnerships, we hope to create a culture that is enriching to all, regardless of ability.

**Katherine-Alice Grasham**

**Diocesan Disability Officer**

**March 2020**

Supporting the Diocesan Strategy

In light of the new Diocesan Strategy, which was approved by Synod in March 2019, three goals for the Disability Strategy have been developed which align with the Strategy Framework:

**Sharing a vision for**

Confident Christians,

Growing churches,

Transforming communities

**Characterised by**

Loving, Living, Learning

**Enabled by**

Clergy and lay together,

Purposeful resourcing,

Dynamic partnerships

**Achieved by**

Thriving as a distinctive diocese, Reimagining ministry,

Nurturing lay discipleship, Building leadership pathways,

Growing young people as Christians

In particular, the Disability Strategy will complement and strengthen the vision to see confident Christians, growing churches, and transforming communities – and it will play its part in further developing the progress of each of the five Diocesan Strategy goals.

The Diocesan Disability Team will take the leading role in promoting the goals and visions in this strategy. Following the Disability Task Group’s review, the team will be structured in a similar way to the Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Team, with its Area Coordinators.

**Nature of the new structure**

It has been noted that the Team works well as a non-hierarchical group, and this should be maintained. However, in order to address the key points and priorities above, a new structure is being established to facilitate the delivery of this strategy. It corresponds to a similar model to the Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Team, which combines a Diocesan Team and area-based teams. This new structure would be adopted in a way which ensures that there is an interdependency between the Diocesan and Area teams. Further information on the team structure can be found in the Appendices.

It is envisioned that a member of the Diocesan Team is present at the Diocesan Synod as a Diocesan Representative to contribute their view and raise awareness of disabilities. This would enable the voice of people with disabilities to be heard, and ensure a positive impact on Diocesan initiatives, procedures and policies**.**

**Core Values of the Diocesan and Area Teams**

1. A belief in the equality of all people
2. A passion to promote the inclusion, belonging, and participation of people of all abilities and gifts in the worship and service of God through the life of the church
3. A commitment to work as a team, drawing on and contributing to the expertise of other diocesan departments and external organisations
4. Take seriously safeguarding, GDPR, and the Equality Act 2010 by undertaking relevant training where possible and employing Safer Recruitment
5. An understanding of and commitment to the Diocesan Strategy

Disability Strategic Goals

**Goal 1:** We want to be **distinctive** and outstanding at including and empowering people with disabilities, and encouraging everyone to be loving, living and learning alongside each other. We want everyone to have the opportunity to be part of the “have a go” culture we are working to develop in this diocese. We especially want to assist churches with facilitating different learning styles within teaching and worship.

*“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” James 2:17*

Objectives:

* Diocesan e-news to have articles relating to disability at least three times a year, and episcopal area publications to have articles at least once a year
* Disability Team to develop Disabled Friendly Church Award (as done in the Diocese of Liverpool) or similar that we can use in the Diocese of Leeds
* Disability Team to run training for each deanery on learning styles, worship styles and spiritual styles

**Goal 2:** We want to see more clergy and lay, both those with disabilities and those without, working together to **reimagine ministry** and grow their churches. We want to make sure communities are being transformed for the benefit of those with disabilities, as well as harnessing the gifts of all God’s people and resourcing specialist opportunities for worship where appropriate.

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Ephesians 4:11-12*

Objectives:

* At least 25% of churches in each deanery to have Parish Disability Representatives, and each episcopal area to have an Area Coordinator by the end of 2020
* Each episcopal area to have representation/input by disabled people or members of the Disability Team at all appropriate area events, e.g. Bradford Episcopal Area Forum
* Parishes with Disability Representatives to invite them to report to PCC meetings at least once a year

**Goal 3:** We want to see more people with disabilities be **nurtured** appropriatelyin their faith, included in everyday church life, and empowered to express their faith in a way that works for them. We want to continue to provide multiple options for accessing resources so that all can be a part of the family of God in this diocese.

*“In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” Romans 12:5*

Objectives:

* Disability Team will host annual forums for people within the diocese with disabilities in order for their voices to be heard and to facilitate learning between abled and disabled people
* Disability Team will work closely alongside minsters and cathedrals to ensure regular and authentic representation of people with disabilities, and will create an audit to be completed biennially to establish this
* Disability Team to facilitate at least 4 different training sessions (online via the Digital Learning Platform and in person) per year

**Goal 4:** We want to see an increase in people coming forward for both **clergy and lay ministry** both by training and supporting those who are responsible for these ministries, and by investing in those with disabilities to ensure they are not put off by the application or training process.

*“To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.” 1 Corinthians 12:8-10*

Objectives:

* Disability Team to assist clergy training, lay training and vocations departments with training, support, and resources and meet with these teams once a year to enable this
* Disability Team to meet with applicants for clerical and lay ministries and those considering vocational roles with disabilities to provide and signpost to appropriate support
* Disability Officer to support interns and Director of Interns both in evolving their practice to be more accessible, and to encourage people with disabilities to participate in internships within the Diocese of Leeds

**Goal 5:** We want to make sure that **children and young people** with disabilities are not excluded from churches or worship spaces, and are instead enriched by their experiences with the church so that they grow in their faith. We want to equip children’s leaders, youth leaders and chaplains to be confident to work with and support those with disabilities.

*“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” 1 Peter 3:8*

Objectives:

* Disability Team to assist Children and Youth Department with training, support, and resources and meet with the team once a year to enable this
* Disability Officer to work with Education Department and School Chaplains to equip and resource ministry in and with schools to be accessible and disability-friendly, and to meet at least once a year with Director of Education
* Disability Officer to work with Children and Youth department to develop Additional Needs Training programme

The Vision

In conclusion, we hope these goals will lead us over the next five years to this vision:

**Transforming Communities –** to be a diocese that takes action to ensure accessibility and inclusion for all and promotes disability awareness in all aspects of life

**Growing Churches –** to be a diocese that enables and encourages full participation of people with disabilities

**Confident Christians –** to be a diocese which is aware, knowledgeable, and compassionate about disabilities and the challenges disabled people face

Appendix 1: Explanatory Model

**Model 1: Interdependent relationship feeding into each other**

Appendix 2: Diocesan Disability Team

**Purpose:**

Enable clergy and lay people of all abilities to be confident in mission and ministry with people with disabilities throughout the diocese by:

1. Delivering training for clergy and lay people, including Parish Representatives, at diocesan level and through a conference or celebration day once a year
2. Being a two-way channel between Diocesan and national initiatives
3. Providing resources and signposting
4. Keeping afresh a Diocesan strategy of inclusion, participation and equality of people of all abilities

The team would consist of people of different abilities so that as wide a range of experiences of disability are represented.

**Roles:**

1. Administrator
2. Chairperson
3. D/deaf Minister/Representative
4. Disability Officer
5. Episcopal Area Coordinators
6. Specialist

**Responsibilities:**

**Administrator**

1. Attend meetings and take minutes
2. Prepare the agenda
3. Distribute minutes, agenda, and relevant documents
4. Book meeting room/venue for meetings

**Chairperson**

1. Ensure the Team meets at least 3 times a year
2. Approve agenda for each meeting
3. Ensure all members of the Diocesan Team are given an equal opportunity to raise concerns, feedback good practice, and highlight points of interest
4. Represent and speak on behalf of the Team to others in the diocese, including Deanery Synod

**D/deaf Minister/Representative**

1. Keep the Diocesan Team informed of concerns and good practice in the D/deaf community to ensure the diocese is aware of the issues people who are Deaf and/or have hearing loss face
2. Provide D/deaf awareness training when and where possible

**Disability Officer**

1. Ensure that Parish Representatives are acknowledged by their PCCs, and encourage churches and their Parish Representatives to go through Safer Recruitment and Safeguarding training
2. Set the agenda for each meeting in consultation with the Chairperson
3. Reach out across the diocese by providing advocacy and awareness training
4. Be a point of contact for signposting and advice
5. Put in place a system that ensures Parish Representatives are recruited appropriately by churches and are being encouraged by their church to complete Safeguarding training
6. Build a network of churches that can support each other in their aim to be more accessible and inclusive
7. Promote the Parish Representative scheme

**Episcopal Area Coordinators**

1. Be a contact for support, advice and signposting for Parish Disability Representatives in their area
2. Promote the growth in numbers, knowledge and skills of Parish Representatives in their area
3. Co-ordinate advocacy and training events in their episcopal area at least once a year
4. Feedback good practice and areas of concern or issues to the rest of the Diocesan Team to further the aims of the Team

**Specialist**

1. To be invited on a meeting-by-meeting basis when their area of specialism is under discussion.

Appendix 3: Episcopal Area Teams

**Purpose:**

Enable clergy and lay people of all abilities to be confident in mission and ministry with people with disabilities by:

1. Being aware of local needs and requests for guidance and training to feedback to the Diocesan Team
2. Signposting upon requests from parishes or referring them to the Disability Officer
3. Promote the Parish Representative scheme
4. Organise episcopal area meet-ups for representatives and others

**Roles:**

Area Coordinator, Parish Disability Representatives, Specialist

**Responsibilities:**

**Area Coordinators**

Responsibilities are discussed above

**Parish Disability Representatives**

1. Ensure the inclusion, belonging and participation of those with disabilities is regularly on the agenda of their local church
2. Raise concerns and feedback good practice in their church to their Area Coordinator

**Specialist**

1. To be invited on a meeting-by-meeting basis when their area of specialism is under discussion

Appendix 4: Diocesan Disability Communications

Disability communications distribute information about training, events and support, and make use of the following media:

* A Disability Newsletter which is sent out bimonthly. This goes to all Disability Parish Representatives and the Disability Team. It is put together by the Disability Administrator, and its content is primarily details about events and training.
* A Facebook Group called “Diocese of Leeds Disability Network”, which is open to Parish Representatives and the wider congregations. We use this group to notify people of events, as well as share relevant articles and news stories. It’s also an opportunity for people to start discussions, as anyone can share on the Facebook Group, although it is moderated.
* A learning community on the Digital Learning Platform called “Disability, Inclusion and Participation” where there is the opportunity to share events, resources and more. There is also the capacity to have discussions and forums.
* The Diocesan E-news which goes out monthly, where we can share news stories from around the entire diocese with the wider church.
* Other forms of communication which will be used and developed as needed in the future.

1. https://www.scope.org.uk/media/press-releases/brits-feel-uncomfortable-with-disabled-people/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)