

PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN FISHER

Cannon Hill Lane, Merton,

Policy for Inclusion of Parish Members

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy paper documents a strategy agreed within the Parish Advisory Council for service and sacramental inclusion, applicable to all members of the St John Fisher Parish.
- 1.2 The paper will be subject to review annually at the autumn meeting of the Parish Advisory Council.
- 1.3 The policy acknowledges the legal requirements in the Equality Act (2010). It is considered that the majority of these requirements will be met by the Church's main motivating force, which engages principles of Christian charity.
- 1.4 Ownership of this policy document for implementation and revision purposes, lies with the St John Fisher Parish Advisory Council.

2 General

- 2.1 The Church building and environment, will not by intent exclude any member of the parish. Where a member of the parish indicates disability or difficulty in attending services or the sacraments, his/her special need will be taken into consideration in reviewing access.
- 2.2 "Members of the Parish" will be said to include all persons who wish to attend services at St John Fisher Church regularly.
- 2.3 Special need will take into account hearing or sight difficulties, physical and learning difficulties as well as vulnerable members of the community, including adults and children.
- 2.4 A primary requirement of the Inclusion policy will be the health and safety of parish members.

- 2.5 At the beginning of each year, a notice will be included in the parish newsletter inviting comments or concerns from parishioners about the facilities provided for those with special needs, including any examples of needs not catered for. The parish will do what it can to respond to these comments or concerns.
- 2.6 If the need justifies it, a ‘disability officer’ will be appointed to advise the Parish Advisory Council on disability matters including fund raising.
- 2.7 It is the intention of the Parish Advisory Council that where a need is identified, assistance at services or pastoral care be provided to disabled persons including the use of transport or escort schemes.
- 2.8 Clear marking of all facilities designed for disabled persons will be provided.
- 2.9 Where a need is identified, the parish will seek to provide support for parents and carers of disabled people.
- 2.10 A welcoming policy for attendance at all services and events shall be adopted to include disabled members of the parish. Disabled members will be encouraged to express their views in respect of special needs.

3 Disability Requirements

3.1 Mobility Disabilities

- 3.1.1 Wheelchair access will be reasonably facilitated to parts of the church and grounds e.g. by construction of ramps allowing easy passage. Any alterations to the church’s physical features will take account of disabled people’s access.
- 3.1.2 Foot traffic shall be facilitated by passages and corridors free from obstruction.
- 3.1.3 At least two disabled parking spaces reserved for disabled persons only, will be provided with easy access to the church.

However, early attendance at all services for disabled drivers will be recommended.

- 3.1.4 Toilet facilities suitable for use by disabled people shall be provided.
- 3.1.5 Seating with ample leg-room with access near the church entrance, will be provided for people with mobility disabilities.
- 3.1.6 Provision will be made in the church for wheelchair users, including the provision of wheelchairs. Parishioners who need to use motorised wheelchairs in the church on a regular basis are invited to discuss their needs with one of the clergy.

3.2 People with Hearing Difficulties

- 3.2.1 An ‘induction loop system’ will be installed for hearing assistance to people with difficulties. The system will have microphonic input from the altar.
- 3.2.2 The system will be subject to test periodically, and maintained by a competent technician as required.
- 3.2.3 If a need arises and alternative provision is unavailable, the use of sign language at specified services will be considered. If necessary, training of a member of the parish would take place to facilitate this use.

3.3 People with Visual Difficulties

- 3.3.1 If a need is identified, the possibility of pastoral care for attendance at services will be investigated.
- 3.3.2 When floor renewal takes place a floor marking identification scheme will be considered.
- 3.3.3 If a need is identified, copies of text for services shall be made available in large print or Braille (such as the provision of large print morning prayer books available in the church).

- 3.3.4 If a need is identified, a few large-print copies of the weekly newsletter shall be made available.

3.4 People with Learning Difficulties and Special needs

- 3.4.1 Visual aids and signs shall be employed where necessary to enhance church services.
- 3.4.2 Participation in all activities e.g. services, social events, choir etc will be encouraged.

3.5 Vulnerable Adults and Children

- 3.5.1 A pathway for dealing with suspected abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) of children or vulnerable adults, involved in parish groups and parish activities, shall be identified. The identity of the Parish Safeguarding Representative will be shown on church notice boards.
- 3.5.2 See also St John Fisher Parish guidelines for Good Practice “Child Protection Policy” document.

Appendices

1. History

Draft 1. Prepared 1st September 2004, by St John Fisher parishioners, Neville Beddoe and George Atallah, with input derived from Christian Education Centre, Archdiocese of Southwark.

Issue 1. Approved version derived from earlier draft with amendments suggested at the Parish Advisory Council meeting on September 27th 2004.

Issue 2. Updates to reflect changes made between 2004 and 2009 – see minutes of meeting on 28th September 2009.

Issue 3 Updates to 1.3 (to refer to new Equality Act - October 2010) and to clarify the scope of 3.5.1 as limited to parish groups & activities.

Issue 4 Updates to clarify services that will be considered should the various needs arise.

Issue 5 Updates to paragraphs 2.5, 2.9, 3.1.6, 3.3.1 and 3.3.3.

Issue 6 Update to paragraph 2.5 to be specific about the timing of the annual notice in the parish newsletter.

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