

Disability Inclusion and Action Group (DIAG)



Chair's Report for Year 2021 - 2022 October 2022

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Introduction

This chair's report outlines the Disability Inclusion and Action Group (DIAG) for the Diocese of Derby. Its background, constitution, activities, achievements, and challenges for year 2021/2022 and concluding with next steps/considerations. An Annex is attached at the end of this document.

Background

The DIAG was formed in 2021 and had its inaugural meeting on 8 November 2021. The DIAG was formed as a direct result of a consultation paper drawn up by Cptn Tim Rourke titled "The Disabling Church". The DIAG was formed to create an enabling channel based on Terms of Reference (ToRs) agreed at the inaugural meeting. The ToR's cover these three themes: **Attitude**, **Access** and **Agency**. A copy of these ToRs are available in Appendix 1.

Seven meetings have been attended, November and December in 2021, February, March, May, June, September and October 2022.

Constitution

DIAG group started with 8 members in the group. Across the year, one member has since left, wishing to devote time to her own diocese which is outside of Derbyshire. Seven members of the group remain. The group is championed by The Very Revd Malcolm Macnaughton, Bishop of Repton, and currently chaired by Carl Veal. The group aims to meet monthly with two-month gaps at Christmas and Easter, and for summer recess.

Meetings last approx two hours and are held by Zoom with an aim to meet up once or twice yearly in person. The group members are spread across the whole of Derbyshire which is a benefit towards representation across the area of the diocese, but it can pose challenges for in-person meetings. owing to the wide geographical spread of Derbyshire. The group is entirely run by volunteers on behalf of the Diocese of Derby.



Bishop Malcolm with Carl Veale, Chair DIAG

Summary of Activities

The initial task for the group was to prioritise and set out the tasks to be tackled based on the list of outcomes to be addressed from Cptn Tim Rourke's report 'The Disabling Church'. The report was formally received by Diocesan Synod in October 2021. A list of priorities was adopted and awaits first review.

Initial priority was given to:

1. The production of a church accessibility audit programme and covering support.
Documentation was gathered and prepared for the support and implementation of this priority.
2. Over-riding priority is initially given to production of an internet presence (webpage) to allow for channels of communication between the group and the patrons of Churches of Derbyshire.
3. Discussions on the provision of British Sign Language (BSL) provision was had and information gathered to enable churches to be sign-posted towards providers, which will be included in the DIAG webpages.
4. A decision was made to provide braille print services, again to be sign-posted for users (churches).
5. In the past year, the group has discussed many aspirational projects, met in person, established a group email, prepared documentation for the website.
6. The group is represented on the National Disability Advisors Group for the Anglican Church. This meets monthly and is in the main, attended by employed salaried representatives of each diocese.
7. A starting budget was allocated to the group of £500 (tbv) – to-date, none of this budget has been accessed.
8. Guest speakers have attended, and a list of invitees is held going forwards.

Challenges

The group has good, on-going support from Bishop Malcolm and the Diocesan Communications Team, and strives to achieve what it can with limited means.

The group comprises of volunteers, who are dedicated to the cause of improving disabled access to patrons of its churches. However, the group is small and has a recognised list which will take time to implement. Current risk to depletion of the members of the group is high and any loss of members will have a significant impact.

Presently, there is no shortage of aspirational projects for the group but it is recognised progress is slow.

Conclusions

Bishop Malcolm and Carl Veale extend full thanks and recognition to the existing members of DIAG and to all those who have provided support, whether vocal or in person. All contributions have been most welcome, and we hope the group will continue to give valuable support.

Much positive material has been discussed and agreed but at this point development forward has been slow – a recognition that the group are all volunteers and thus limited in the time that can be given.

This report highlights just how much has been achieved across the past year with limited resources. It acknowledges progress can be slower than wished for and of the risk to resources.

Next steps

In the immediate future, resources should be focused on:

1. Completion of the webpage and launch.
2. Complete and implement audit process.
3. The provision of awareness sessions for audits and for disability awareness (clergy specific).
4. A review of priorities in line with the ToRs of Attitude, Access and Agency.
5. What the DIAG would like to achieve in 2022 / 2023.
6. Any review of the current constitution.

Aspirational

Multimedia and social media

1. Form a communication group (WhatsApp?).
2. Internet presence has almost wholly focused on development of a webpage but consideration needs to be given to social media as a whole ie: Facebook (META), Twitter (blogs), WhatsApp, etc.
3. A WhatsApp group to include the group would provide an advantage to group communications, be inclusive, speed up communication and allow for greater ongoing discussions in between meetings.

Address resources

A drive to recruit some more members to the working group of DIAG, the number to be decided.



Lynda Herbert invited Bishop Malcolm to experience church from a wheelchair user's perspective

Appendix

1. Terms of Reference

1.1 Attitude

- To develop a Disability Inclusion Action Group to challenge the whole Diocese and embed the recommendations of this report into local church life.
- To provide a clear challenge to opinions that diminish disabled people's lives within churches in this diocese, by producing resources and training, especially about identity, healing and the hurt caused by unhelpful 'theologies' that blame sin and a lack of faith as the cause of illness and disability. 10 British Values – are a part of the National Curriculum in all schools where diversity, inclusion and respect for all people are taught. A potential engagement with this may be beneficial to our churches.
- To develop a team of preachers and speakers able to communicate at diocesan and local church services and events in ways that encourage disabled people in local congregations and challenge harmful interpretations of the Bible that limit disabled people
- To develop our theological understanding of disability to benefit the group and the wider church. To listen to the experience of disabled people and reflect on what that teaches us about God and the nature of church that is striving to be 'Simpler, Humbler and Bolder'.

1.2 Access

- To develop a link between the advisory group and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) as a resource for churches undertaking physical changes to help them include the needs of disabled people.
- To develop a local 'Access Audit' process to enable local churches to look at all aspects of access in their buildings and give help to prioritise a range of options to follow.
- To investigate grants and internal budgets to fund an access budget for regular diocesan processes and to support the ongoing work and administration of the Disability Inclusion Action Group (DIAG).

1.3 Agency

- To provide resources for several events to happen each year for disabled people to meet with God and respond. This may start with one or two but would aim to grow to four separate resourced day events by 2024.
- To encourage and provide challenge and support for Diocesan discernment processes to deepen the understanding of and increase the proportion of disabled leaders in the church. Disabled people should be represented in these processes.
- To develop a way for disabled people to raise feedback on their inclusion and exclusion, both locally and at diocesan level.