

# Sight Loss Friendly Church: **Best Practice Guidelines**



from TORCH TRUST

We know that every church wants to be a welcoming place for all who enter. This resource offers guidance on how to help provide that for people with sight loss.

## Things to consider

### Welcoming people entering the church

- Always ask people with sight loss what you can do to make them feel welcome.
- Ask if the person needs assistance to find their way around, especially where the toilets are and the general layout of the building. You may have to guide someone to the toilet door (but no further), or to their seat.
- Be specific when giving directions – don't say 'over there' or only use gestures. Use the rights and lefts of the person you're talking to, not your own, as they may not know which way you're facing.
- Consider having people welcoming at the church door with an additional person allocated to guide people around if needed. It may be a good idea for these welcomers to check at the end of the service whether further assistance is needed, for example getting them a cup of tea.
- If using hymn books or other printed materials see if you can get large print (LP) or braille copies. Don't assume all people with sight loss can read LP or braille, it's always best to ask! Emailing copies of materials beforehand can be a great option for some people.





## Including everybody during the service

- Let people know when to sit or stand (if they wish to and are able to).
- Projector screens are great but try to keep sharp contrasts between the background and words, and use the largest font size possible (see our document *Preparing Materials* for more advice).
- When showing videos or slides without spoken words, describe what others can see on screens or videos.
- When addressing the congregation use inclusive terms such as 'If you are able' e.g. "You can follow the words on the screen, if you are able to read them."
- Try to use a mixture of approaches in delivering services. Don't rely solely on audio visual tech to make services interesting.

- People with sight loss tell us that other senses are so important to them, opportunities for touching different things, or experiencing different smells could enhance enjoyment for all.
- Remember that people with sight loss won't see your facial expression, body language or other visual prompts. Describe visual incidents as they happen.

## Engaging with and talking to people at the end of the service

- When talking to a person with sight loss, begin by saying their name, where possible.
- Don't leave a person with sight loss standing alone, instead invite them to join in with conversations or ask them who they might like to be with.
- Remember for people with sight loss it can be difficult to figure out what's going on in a busy, noisy room.
- If bringing someone a drink, make sure they know where you have placed the cup. If they take it in their hands, mention if there is somewhere nearby they can safely put it down.
- Tell people with sight loss when you are moving away from them. People can feel awkward and embarrassed if they keep talking to you when you've moved away.
- Telling people about upcoming church events can really make them feel included. As can sharing with them what's going on around them at the time, especially if everyone starts laughing about a visual joke.
- A person with sight loss may need assistance to find their coat or belongings when they come to leave.