

The
WILLIAM
KEOWN
Trust

Church Access



**This guide has been researched and produced by the Access and Education Committee of
the The William Keown Trust, an Independent Registered Charity No. XO 1283/84**

Almost 2000 years ago I had great difficulty getting access to premises to meet a man with a great concern for people with disabilities.



I was paralysed. In those days people like me were marginalised, with little or no help offered to us. But that day my friends were determined to raise people's awareness of disability and mine in particular. As access was not possible through the doors we made our entrance by an unconventional route. My friends carried me on to the roof, made a hole in it and lowered me into a room full of people. No one could have failed to notice my disability but one man there did something for me. He made me whole but he also made people aware of those of us who have disabilities.

Today, 2000 years later, there are many places where that man's teaching is still held in high regard, but getting into those places is sometimes very difficult for people like me.

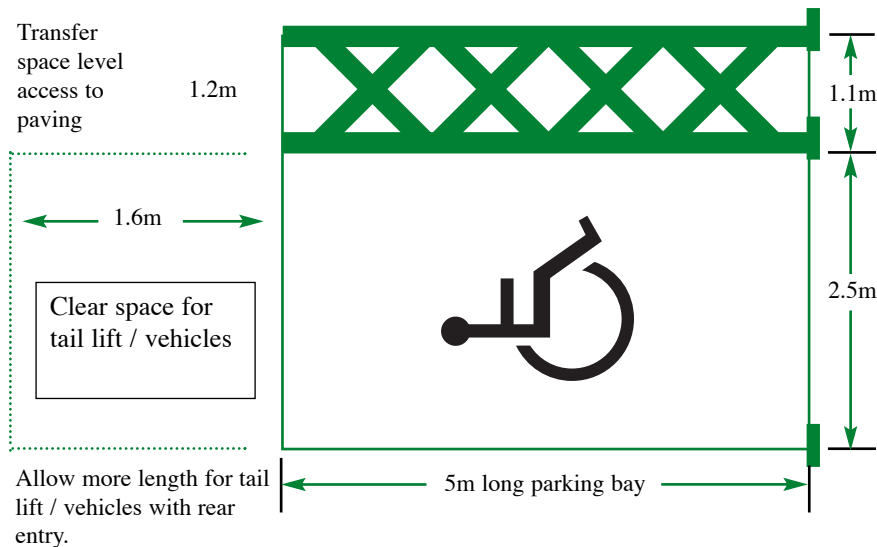
Have you noticed me in your church? I am the one who walks slowly with a stout stick to support me. Sometimes I come in a wheelchair. Sometimes I carry a white cane. When I visit your church I like to be able to go on my own if possible, but I do value the way your church welcomes me.



Even the notice board outside can tell me I am welcome when I see the international access symbol.

Many people with disabilities arrive at the church in a car. A clearly marked parking space should be provided for them near the entrance to the building. The dimensions for a parking bay near the church door are shown in diagram 1.

DIAGRAM 1 - PARKING



If there are steps to the door ensure that a handrail is fitted and designed to give maximum support to a person who has arthritis of hips or hands. See diagram 2.

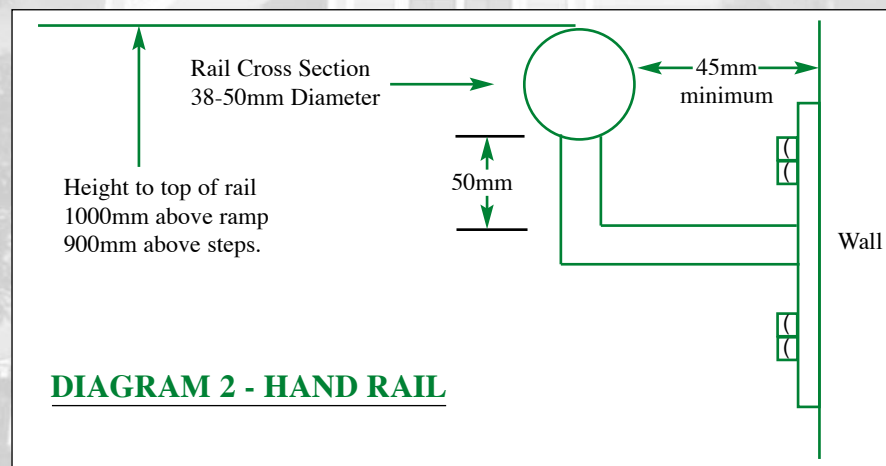
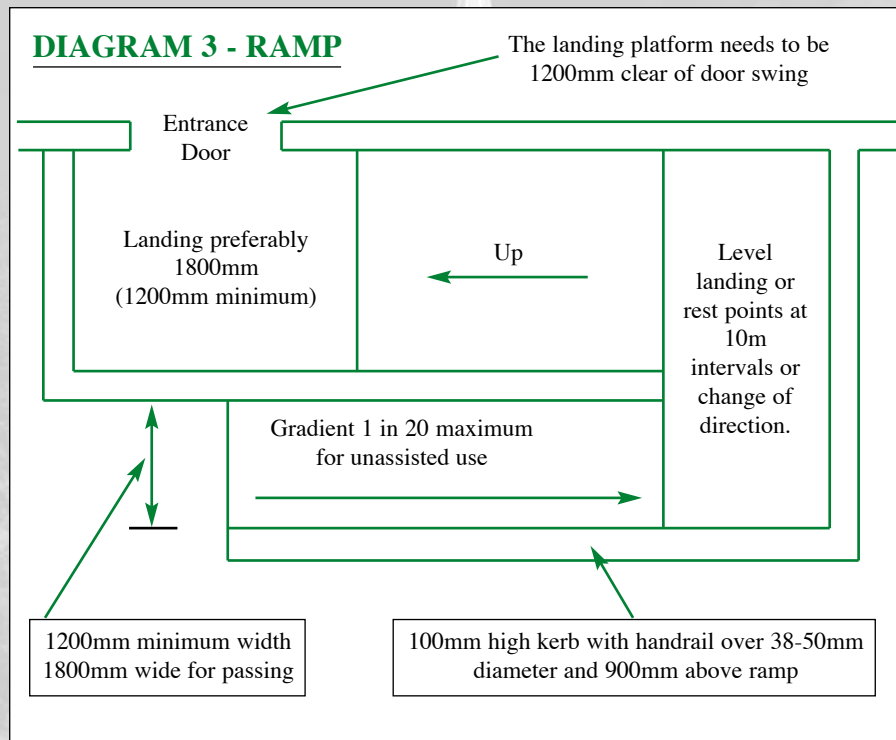


DIAGRAM 2 - HAND RAIL

A wheelchair user will require a ramp to that door. See diagram 3.



When faced with a wheelchair access problem sometimes ramping is not feasible due to the considerable length required to reach the recommended gradient. Lift platforms, wheelchair stair lifts and inter-floor lifts of suitable dimensions can often overcome this problem.

Many churches are very welcoming to me. I like to be met in the porch or vestibule of your church by a steward so I can tell that person about my needs.

A visitor with visual impairment can be supplied with a large print bible, song or prayer book. (16 point sans serif typeface).

When an overhead projector is used acetates should display words in 30 point type. Photocopies can be provided to people unable to see the screen.

A visitor with hearing impairment will hear the spoken word more clearly through their hearing aid if an induction loop is installed in the building. A person who can lip read can be escorted to a seat where they can more easily see the speaker.

When the steward opens the door to the sanctuary I like the church to be well lighted.

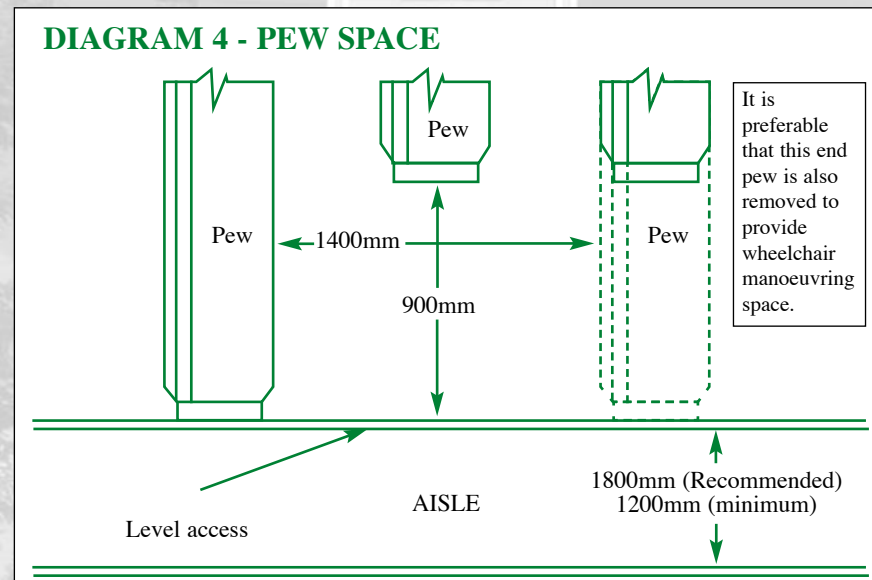
Good lighting without glare can accentuate textures and colour contrasts on walls, floor and furniture. This enhances visual clues for people with visual impairment.

For a wheelchair user the door should have a clear opening of 850mm.

When I am using my walking aid or wheelchair I like a level threshold to the aisle or passageway and not having to step up to the pews or seats.

Inside the church I like to sit with my friends even when I am in a wheelchair. Sitting in the aisle does exclude me from the fellowship.

Spaces for wheelchair users should be provided in different areas of the church to afford a choice. This may mean structural alterations where there are fixed pews. Aisles and passageways should be wide enough to permit a wheelchair and other people to pass comfortably (1200mm minimum). A clear width of 1800 mm will allow two wheelchairs to pass each other. The space required for a wheelchair user is usually 1400 mm x 900 mm but this may depend on the width of the aisle. See diagram 4.



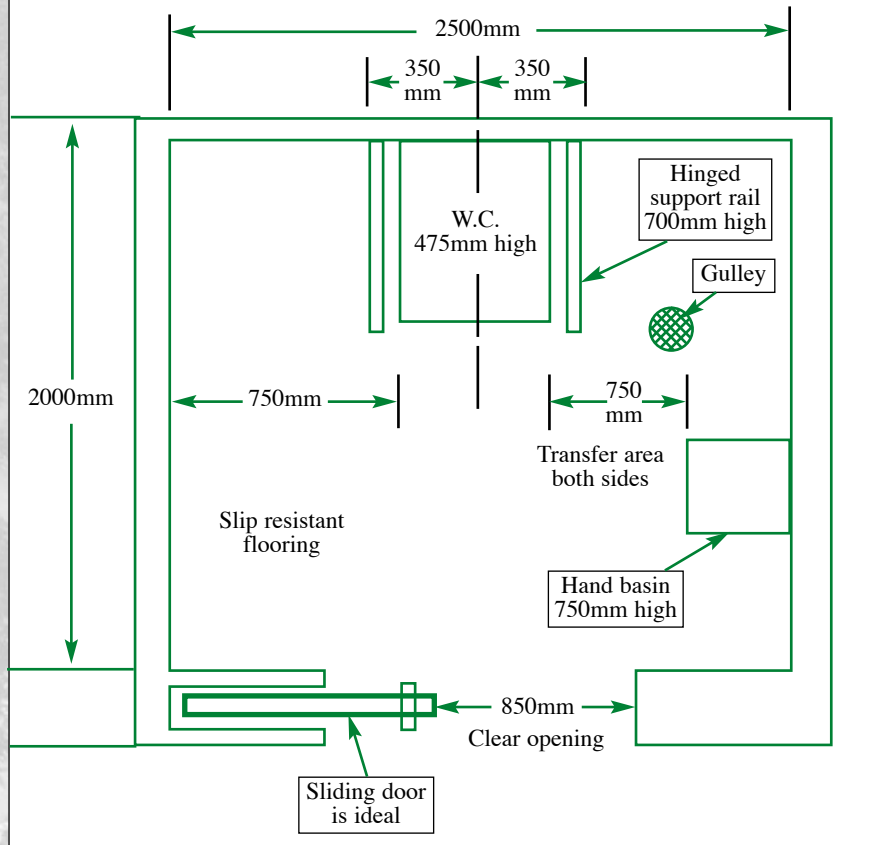
When I can only walk a short distance I like to have access to seating reserved near the door. If there are chairs with arms this really is a blessing.

During the communion service or mass I am reassured when I do not have to climb any steps to the communion table or altar and I have the choice to sit, stand or kneel.

Confessional rooms should have level access through a door with 850mm clear opening. For a wheelchair user to turn in this room a clear area 1600mm x 1400mm is required.

Usually the church services last one hour but if I am staying for a longer time I would be embarrassed if I found I could not get access to a toilet.

DIAGRAM 5 - TOILET



This design of unisex toilet will provide ease of access for all members of the congregation and should be approached from a main corridor avoiding an internal lobby and the necessity of a second door. See diagram 5.

The dimensions (2.0m x 2.5m) are greater than the building regulations (1.5m x 2.0m). These have been found by experienced wheelchair users to provide for easier transfer manoeuvres and for carer when required.

A sliding door is often easier to open from a wheelchair. A two way locking mechanism is recommended on all toilet doors.

In the toilet a wash hand basin should be mounted on brackets as a pedestal support obstructs the wheelchair users leg space.

A cord operated alarm should be installed in case of emergencies.

When I visit your church I want to be accepted as part of your fellowship. Here are some guidelines that may help you welcome a person with a disability.

- **Speak directly to the person with the disability and ask if you can help them.**
- **If the person has a visual impairment tell them who you are.**
- **If they need to be guided to a seat describe the location of the seat and allow them to walk a little behind you holding on to your arm.**
- **If the person has a hearing impairment speak clearly at normal speed allowing them to watch your lips.**
- **If the person is a wheelchair user speak to them with eye contact at their level. Don't lean on their wheelchair. This is their personal space.**

These are the basic features that would make any disability become insignificant when I go to a church to worship God in the fellowship of a sensitive and caring people . . . 2000 years on.

Notes for Church Authorities, Architects, Building Control Departments and Contractors

This Church Access Guide has been prepared by people **experienced** in coping with disabilities, architects, occupational therapists, building control officers and churches which have made provision for members with disabilities.

People with disabilities comprise 17.4% of the population. With an increasing number of older people in the future there will be a greater number attending church with disabilities. By the year 2004 the Disability Discrimination Act 1996 will require service providers to make reasonable alterations, both externally and internally, to their church premises to overcome physical barriers to access.

Churches are service providers under this legislation. The extent to which it is reasonable for a church to make alterations may depend in its size, resources and particular circumstances.

The William Keown Trust has published this guide to help churches of all denominations provide a caring and inclusive environment for their members.

The History of the William Keown Trust . . .

The founder of the William Keown Trust, Bill Keown, was born with cerebral palsy and given a terminal infant life expectancy. His farming parents set him in a horse's collar to provide back support and, holding on to the farm collie dog, he learned to walk at the age of five years.

Eventually, entering the open education system at the age of eight he progressed to employment, which was broken by a protracted period of major orthopaedic surgery, following which he set up his Cottage Industry Enterprise. He holds the MBE for services to rural industry in County Down.

He was initially involved in fund-raising for orthopaedic development servicing the whole community. He was nominated for the Spastic Achievement Award in 1976 and took second place in the whole of the United Kingdom. After receiving this recognition he was persuaded by his friends to provide an opportunity whereby recognition could be given to other people who are achievers in spite of their disabilities. In 1979 the William Keown Trust was set up and the Adult Achievement Awards were initiated. Later these Awards were expanded to include the Children of Courage Awards and the Haldane Butler Memorial Trophy.

Recipients of the Awards and their families, concerned at the standard of access within the built and open environment, asked the Trust to address the problem. The unique William Keown Trust Access Awards for buildings that are both accessible and comfortable for people with disabilities were introduced in 1985. These Awards seek to profile the particular requirements of those with disabilities and encourage developers and those involved in the building process to make provision for good access, ease of internal circulation and egress.

The Trust regularly undertakes access audits and gives professional advice on design and planning of both new and established buildings. Our networking, consultation, information and support departments will be happy to assist you.

The Trust responds to many enquiries on disability issues every year, and maintains a comprehensive library and information bank. For advice and information contact:
The William Keown Trust, 3 Church View, Dundrum, Co. Down, BT33 0NA.
Telephone: 028 4375 1243. Fax: 028 4375 1444.
Website: www.wkeowntrust.co.uk Email: wkeowntrust@btconnect.com



Bill Keown MBE, JP

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