

Temporary Ramps

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) requires Churches (as 'service providers'!) to have made 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers of access from 1st October 2004.

This paper is specifically concerned with ramps. Many parishes are purchasing or making movable, temporary ramps. Where ramps genuinely fall into this category no Faculty should be needed. They can be a good first response to the problem.



It is important to note, however, that installing a temporary ramp is not a substitute for

- (a) the PCC conducting a proper survey of DDA needs and establishing a written policy as to how they are going to meet them. This process, recorded carefully in the PCC minutes, is a way of showing that you have responded reasonably to the requirements of the Act - where reasonably will include taking into account how quickly funds can be made available and the limitations imposed on you by the nature of your buildings. Your architect may be able to offer you an imaginative solution.
- (b) where the building and site allow, working towards the installation of a permanent ramp, properly integrated with the Church, for which a Faculty will be required.

Arguments in favour of fixed ramps are

- temporary ramps need lifting into position - this requires training to avoid injury to the lifters and correct deployment. By definition they do not provide for fully independent access, and if no-one is available to put the ramp into position there is no benefit at all.
- such ramps may move while in use unless carefully designed and installed. Any maintenance needs should also be carefully addressed. In most circumstances they can also present a hazard themselves e.g. to funeral bearers, and may need signing and guarding. It may be wise to inform insurers of their use.

'Best practice' will probably not become clear until there has been a period of implementation, and indeed of case law.

Remember too that physical access is only one of many issues to do with disability discrimination.