

## SECTION F

### CHECKLIST FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

#### Checklist for working with people with Handicaps

##### KEY TASK 1

##### Find out the needs of disabled people from disabled people themselves

Invite disabled people to come together and talk about their lives, their feelings about the Church and their needs. This also applies to parents of mentally handicapped children or adults. Big gatherings are not necessary. In this way the precise needs can be identified and these needs then become your programme for action. If you do this and are then uncertain how specific needs can be met, contact St. Joseph's Centre, The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4TY, tel. 01-202 3999 for the necessary information.

##### KEY TASK 2

##### Find and invite a disabled person to become a member of your organisation or group

Disabled people may be reticent to join groups and organisations for a variety of reasons. It may be that they are simply not interested, but as one said: "I'd like to go along. I'm just not sure I will be welcome." An invitation makes all the difference. It could have many implications: you may have to move your meeting place for a person in a wheelchair. You may need to listen with special attentiveness to a person with a speech defect. You may need to check that there is a real sense of belonging in the group or organisation.

##### OTHER SUGGESTIONS

##### 1 **Make disabled people the focus of a Sunday liturgy.**

Find out from the disabled people in the parish how they would like to participate in a particular way (as a reader, usher, server, choir) and then ensure that such participation continues regularly.

##### 2 **Draw up a register of disabled people in the parish.**

A list for sick communions is usually meticulously kept in every parish. Let this be extended to disabled people (and their families), so that they too can receive that regular supportive visit.

##### 3 **Deliver newsletters.**

Sometimes disabled people are not aware of what is going on in the parish. If a Sunday Mass is inadvertently missed (perhaps because of weather or pain) the weekly newsletter is not seen. A parish organisation could arrange for it to be delivered each week.

**4 Offer an invitation to participate in all parish functions.**

Disabled people often have no choice when it comes to involvement in parish life. To make it easier ensure that they are specifically invited to whatever is going on, and as necessary arrange transport. Then try to see that there is a genuine welcome.

**5 Remove architectural barriers.**

Can disabled people go where you go? Ramped access in preference to steps is an obvious advantage. There are others, such as cofessionals that can accommodate a person in a wheelchair. A diocesan working party is being formed to make suggestions. Contact St. Joseph's Centre, The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4TY, tel. 01-202 3999 for further information.

**6 Promote better communication with deaf people.**

Deaf people and the hard-of-hearing have a particular difficulty in participating in the liturgy. There are systems available to help. Good lighting can improve communication. For details contact the diocesan Pastoral Service for the Deaf.

**7 Promote better communication with blind people.**

Ensure that the blind are informed of the contents of the parish newsletter and of the notices in the church.

**8 Start a group with mentally handicapped people.**

This is not something to rush into. Read 'Colour of Day'. Or 'Faith and Life' magazine.

**9 Consider the preparation of mentally handicapped children for First Communion.**

A book is available to help parents and catechists called INVITATION TO COMMUNION by Sr. Stephanie Clifford. See also 'Life to the Full, No. 1'. Both obtainable from St. Joseph's Centre, The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4TY, tel. 01-202 3999.

**10 Make friends with a mentally handicapped person.**

A friend from outside the family aids development and supports parents. In one parish, Legion of Mary members are regularly doing this sort of work.

**11 Insert the subject of DISABILITY into the school programmes.**

A list of suitable material is available from St. Joseph's Centre, The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4TY, tel. 01-202 3999.

**12 Build a relationship with your local special school.**

Many of our own schools are situated near a local authority special school. Integration can take many forms on many different levels. Could Catholic children from the special school attend Mass at the Catholic school?

13 **Become involved in activities in your local community.**

Local projects are coordinated by Councils for Voluntary Service. These exist in every deanery of the diocese. To find out who to contact ask at your Town Hall, Citizens Advice Bureau or look for a number in the telephone book under the appropriate borough or town. The name of the councils may vary slightly, e.g. Council of Social Service, Voluntary Service Council, Federation of Community Associations. Parish or organisation involvement in such projects is a wonderful way of building a fairer and more just society with others of goodwill.

14 **Contact any hostels, residential homes or hospitals for handicapped people in your parish.**

Those who live in such places are often cut off from the local community and from the church. Links with groups and families can enrich a life poor in quality and aid personal development.