



DIOCESE OF BRISTOL
TRANSFORMING. TOGETHER.

How to... **Join the Sunflower Hidden Disability Scheme**

Some disabilities, conditions or chronic illnesses are not immediately obvious to others. For some people, this can make it hard to understand and believe that someone, with a “non-visible” condition genuinely needs support. Some people question whether you have a disability because you don’t look ‘like you have a disability’.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme was created to encourage inclusivity, acceptance and understanding for those with hidden disabilities.

The Diocesan Synod and Diocesan Support Services have now joined the scheme and would like to encourage parishes to do so too. Joining the scheme shows everyone coming into your church that you welcome disabled people and have a basic understanding of disability awareness.

This guide will tell you about the benefits of the scheme and how to join.

About hidden disability

Disability is something that is likely to affect many if not most of us directly or indirectly at some point in our lives. The overall percentage of people identifying as disabled in the UK is 22%. And if we are not disabled ourselves, we may at some point be caring for someone else who is, such as a family member living with dementia, or a child with a disability.

The Equality Act 2010 definition says that an individual is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal day to day activities.

Only 7% of disabled people are wheelchair users and around 80% of disabled people's disabilities will not be visible at least all or part of the time – that is about 18% of the whole population. A non-visible or hidden disability is exactly what it says on the tin - a disability or health condition that is not immediately obvious. There are many different types of non-visible disabilities.

Being accused of faking it or looked at as if you are, is a problem faced by many people with hidden disabilities. This can lead to a lot of internalised and external stigmatization, leading to disabled people who are often already facing immense challenges in their daily lives, having to justify what they are going through.

Wearing the sunflower highlights that the person wearing it has a hidden disability and may need additional help, understanding or even just a little more time.

Without the hidden disabilities' sunflower, it can be difficult to recognise that someone has a hidden disability. Consequently, sympathy and understanding can often be in short supply and can lead to someone with a hidden disability feeling anxious, not wanting to ask for help or being worried about what people may think. The hidden disabilities sunflower allows someone with a hidden disability to choose to be visible, so that support, assistance or just a little more time can be given.

How to join the scheme

Parishes can join the scheme at the **charity rate** of £55 plus VAT per year.

When you join will receive a Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Basic Starter Pack that includes:

- 10 Sunflower lanyards
- 10 Sunflower cards
- 2 “Can I Help You?” badges
- 1 Strut card
- 1 A3 poster
- 1 shop window sticker

You will also be able to:

- Access the summary Sunflower training
- Access the Sunflower media pack
- Add and manage your church's location on the Sunflower location map.

Once you have joined up you need to decide who needs to take part in the hidden disability training. We suggest that this is all your leadership team, all welcomers/sides people and anyone else who is regularly working with people including children and young people. The training can be done by watching the videos provided – this takes about half an hour. Alternatively, the Diocesan Disability Co-ordinator can deliver bespoke training for you.

Even if you decide to use the video training, please let the Diocesan Disability Coordinator know that you have joined as we want to celebrate and support those churches that join the scheme. Please be aware that there have been some technical problems with the HD Sunflower website with regard to joining as a charity. If you do have a problem please contact the Diocesan Disability Coordinator.

If your church is small and financially unable to join the scheme, you can still promote it in your congregation. You will not have access to the training videos, but the Diocesan Disability Co-ordinator is still available to offer training.

Further information

- [Hidden Disabilities website](#)
- [YouTube](#)