

Good Practice for Working with Adults

Most people will have no difficulty accepting the core values of independence, choice, inclusivity, privacy and respect necessary for good practice. This is about creating an ethos of good practice for our work with all adults, to ensure it is based in a culture of respect.

Good Practice	Bad Practice
<p>Being careful of our language. Always use positive language, for example, a person has a physical, mental or learning disability.</p>	<p>Maintaining a 'them' and 'us' divide in our attitudes, speech and actions. By not speaking to vulnerable adults as one would other adults or by only talking about 'them' without using individuals' names. Avoid using 'handicapped' or 'retarded', for example.</p>
<p>Treat vulnerable adults with the same respect as you would when speaking to or about anyone else. Always refer to them by name, eg 'We must remember to save a seat so Bill can join in.'</p>	<p>By not speaking to or about vulnerable adults as one would to other adults. Grouping people together as if they are all the same removes their individuality.</p>
<p>Use proper sign language for the deaf and for those with learning difficulties.</p>	<p>Using action songs as a substitute for signing is wrong. The 'actions' are not necessarily intelligible to deaf people or those with learning difficulties. They may be fun but actions don't use the words; they are also fine for children or as an aid to worship.</p>



Good Practice	Bad Practice
<p>Make sure everyone can get to where the coffee is served and that they receive the necessary books or papers on arrival at church. Clear access to enable independence is always the preferred option, but remember to be available to offer help should it be needed.</p>	<p>Assuming that the person with a disability has no need of books, etc. Assuming that all disabled people have to be served and cannot help themselves or express a choice or preference.</p>
<p>Giving the same respect as to others. Always knocking on the door before entering a room or home. Asking permission to join them; respecting their home and possessions.</p>	<p>Touching or moving personal possessions without permission. Many people rely on familiarity as navigational aids around their homes. Tidying up without permission.</p>
<p>Respecting differences – be it in appearance, ability or ideas.</p>	<p>Attempting to change someone’s appearance to a more acceptable style. Assuming that odd or challenging behaviour is a sign of demon possession. Imposing ‘ministry’ on vulnerable adults without their informed permission. Assuming that everyone shares your Christian values.</p>
<p>Make sure that everyone has access to all the projected words, pictures and presentations by offering seating with a clear ‘sight line’ by, for example, offering seats near the front (if they are wanted). Have more than one screen for OHPs or PowerPoint presentations and ensure that the images are not adversely affected by light, or provide written copies.</p>	<p>Ignoring or excluding people from everyday events or special occasions either by not inviting them or by not making communication possible. Ignoring people that are below your eye-level by only talking to their companions who may be on your eye-level. Standing whilst talking to someone in a wheelchair assumes you are talking down to them (even if you aren’t) and makes two way communication difficult.</p>

Good Practice	Bad Practice
<p>Have a proper conversation using appropriate language. Ask about interests and hobbies.</p>	<p>Using euphemisms, irony and some jokes with some vulnerable adults can sometimes be misunderstood and your true meaning will not be grasped or it may be felt to be offensive. Just because someone has a disability it doesn't mean they can't hold an adult conversation with you – it is important not to talk in childish language.</p>
<p>Vulnerable adults sometimes welcome physical contact, but remember to ask first. Not withholding physical contact because someone has a disability.</p>	<p>Hugging people without asking can cause distress; people who have disabilities have preferences too. Leaving a disabled person out of 'hugging' or handshakes can be very rejecting and hurtful.</p>
<p>Check the building for accessibility. This doesn't only mean doors, steps and toilets, but also includes sight lines, lighting, acoustics, etc.</p>	<p>Failing to see that we all have similar needs.</p>
<p>Respect for dignity and feelings. Ask about personal preferences, forms of address and how much help might be needed.</p>	<p>Excluding vulnerable adults from events like funerals because, in your opinion, it may be upsetting. Assuming that help is needed all the time with everything.</p>



Good Practice	Bad Practice
<p>Remember the needs of carers for breaks and short times apart (they may want to go to the shops or the person cared for may welcome the chance to go shopping without their carer – it gives something different to talk about on return home).</p>	<p>Being insensitive or neglectful of the emotional needs of carers. Judging how they spend their time or money.</p>