

PRACTICAL GUIDE

Internal signages at church premises

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1.0 Introduction

This practical guide is aimed at helping churches think about three main aspects of internal signage:

- What internal signs need planning permission and/or Building Regulations consent.
- What signage is required by law, for health and safety or other reasons.
- What do churches need to consider in relation to disability access.

2.0 Advertisements which are normally permitted or require consent

Virtually all forms of external signs and notices and some internal signage are covered by The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (referred to below as “the Regulations”) and are controlled Local Authorities (in most cases the Borough Council). Advertisements displayed inside a building, provided that they are not illuminated or displayed within one metre of any window or other external opening from where they can be seen from outside are advertisements which are outside the control of the Local Authority and for which permission is not required.

Therefore, if the proposed sign or notice board is to be illuminated (e.g. either internally within a cabinet or by flood lighting), or if the proposed size of the sign or lettering exceeds the permitted size, then an application for express consent will be required, but this should not be taken that approval may be granted. Such an application is likely to be supported with details or drawings of the proposed sign, together with a site plan to show the intended location.

3.0 Internal signs visible from outside

Under Class I of the Regulations, relating to advertisements which are normally permitted and therefore outside the control of the Local Authority, internal signs do not require permission. However, Class I does not include signs which are placed within 1m of a window or door, or signs which are illuminated, and which are visible externally.

Deemed consent (under Class 12 of the Regulations) does permit such displays which are excluded from Class I, but only if the building itself is mainly used to display advertisements (e.g. an estate agent’s premises), which cannot usually be said of a place of worship.

The conclusion is therefore that any signs posted in such a position where they can be readily seen from outside, such as posters displayed on the inside of windows or entrance doors, are not permitted without express permission. In practice, it is unlikely that the Local Authority will have an issue with such sign, unless they are very large and a distraction.

However, if such signs are erected, the worst-case scenario is that the Local Authority could serve a discontinuance notice for the displays to be removed, and this should not have the major cost implication of having to remove external notice boards erected without permission.

4.0 LCD or similar displays

LCD displays are not specifically referred to in the Regulations. However, some churches are considering the use of an LCD screen visible from outside and served by a computer inside the building. This could be a means of displaying up to date information regarding events at the church premises, including topics to be covered at forthcoming meetings, advertisements for mid-week

activities, such as youth groups, parent and toddler clubs. It can be changed regularly, particularly if the church has a manned office or reception area.

The most attractive proposal is for the screen to be mounted internally up against a glass panel or window, so it is protected from the elements and vandalism. In recent years, this kind of display has now become more popular with estate agents.

As the display is both illuminated and placed against a window to enable viewing from outside it is generally interpreted that this kind of display would require express consent. The application may typically include a picture or drawing of an elevation of the building concerned, indicating the position and size of the display.

In making the application, care will need to be taken that the position any such display does not distract road users driving along the highway.

To avoid potential disturbance to neighbours the use of moving images may be restricted under any consent, together with a condition of the hours between which the display is illuminated, to ensure that the illuminated display and changing images do not continues through the night.

There are no national restrictions regarding the brightness of LCD or similar monitors contained within the Regulations, but some Local Authorities may have their own restrictions or guidelines regarding levels of illuminance, and it would be prudent to make enquiries of the church's Local Authority on this matter. The recently updated application forms require that the illuminance levels of illuminated displays are stated on the application forms.

On a practical matter it should be noted that there are display screens specifically manufactured for this application which have automatic level of light adjustment. A brighter screen may be required in daytime, particularly in cases of strong sunlight, but the screen illumination drops to a lower level in the evening or after dusk.

Domestic quality monitors placed up against a window, particularly a South-facing window, may struggle to provide sufficient brightness to combat the ambient light levels. They can also suffer over-heating as they are unable to dissipate the heat produced from the monitor effectively, as well as absorbing solar gain from the window; thus, causing malfunction or damage/fire risk. Technology is rapidly changing regarding these matters and the seeking of expert advice is recommended.

5.0 Informational signs

Often signs are the first impression people get of you as a church. This is why is important to make signs, whether outside or seen from inside the building, attractive, clear and not confusing, and informative. They should make clear what activities and services the church offers, who to contact (and how to do so) and what new visitors should expect. They should highlight times and locations and offer other useful information to make both visitors and members of the church feel welcome and included and ensure they understand what to expect. Directing people around the building, particularly if your building is large, will be important and ensure they know where the meeting room(s), WCs, exits and office are.

There are certain other signs that are required by law to be displayed, such as:

- Health & Safety Executive law poster if the church employs anyone.
- No-smoking sign and other health and safety signs (see below in section 6).

Other signs can be displayed as a demonstration of good practice or compliance, including:

- Information Commissioner's Office certificate.
- Food hygiene rating.
- Safeguarding contacts.

6.0 Safety signs

The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 require churches to provide various signs, including:

- Safety signs, where risk assessments (under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and your general risk assessments) indicate that they are needed (e.g. the location of first aid facilities under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations). It is useful to record what signage is to be provided and what has been put in place within the risk assessments.
- Fire safety signs, in accordance with the requirements of your fire risk assessment (e.g. fire exit signs and signs next to fire extinguishers) under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. Ideally these signs will be lit by emergency lighting in the event of a power cut or will be made of phosphorescent material.
- Asbestos-containing materials warning signs under the Control of Asbestos Regulations.
- No-smoking signed under the Smoke-free (Signs) Regulations.
- Warning signs for permanent hazards, such as low ceilings or doorways, unusual or uneven steps, storage areas where there is a risk that items might fall on someone. There is no need to provide signs if they do not help reduce risk or if the risk is insignificant.
- Warning signs for temporary hazards, such as workmen on site, wet floors in the WC after cleaning or additional exit signs when you have larger than normal visitor numbers.

The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations also require different types of signs to be specific sizes, colours, shapes and text formats as follows¹:

Details	Meaning or Purpose	Example	Instruction or Information
Circular shape Black pictogram Red edging and diagonal line	Prohibition sign		Signs prohibiting behaviour likely to increase or cause danger
Triangular shape Black pictogram Yellow background	Warning sign		Signs giving warning of a hazard or danger
Circular shape White pictogram Blue background	Mandatory Sign		Signs making certain actions or behaviour compulsory
Rectangular or square shape White pictogram Green background	Emergency escape First aid sign		Signs giving information on emergency exits, first aid or rescue facilities
Rectangular or square shape White pictogram Red background	Firefighting sign		Provides information on the identification or location of firefighting equipment

¹ Further information is available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l64.htm

7.0 Signage for people with disabilities

Quite apart from the legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010² to make your property more accessible, you as a church should want to give people with disabilities (and those affected by disability, such as family members of people with disabilities) the same opportunity to hear the Gospel and to participate fully in the church's life as anyone else. Indeed, by not providing facilities and resources, you imply that people with disabilities are not important to you or God and they will feel unwelcome.

There are many practical changes that you can make to your church building that will enhance the facilities, be more welcoming and be more comfortable for all people. You can do so much to facilitate full participation by everyone, including people with disabilities. This includes the provision of helpful and clear signs and information benefits all users of your facilities.

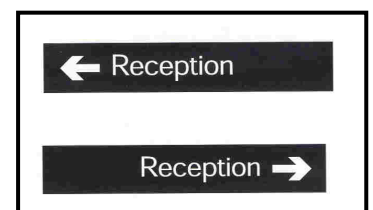
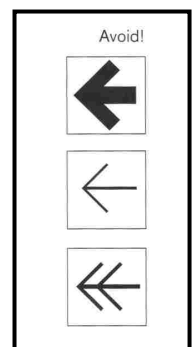
Signs should indicate accessible entrances, WCs, facilities (e.g. hearing assistance systems, such as loop induction) and seating areas for individuals with disabilities. Directional signs should be easy to understand and follow, especially for visitors.

7.1 The four 'C's of sign design

A brief guide to good sign design is shown below:

7.1.1 Clarity

- (a) Keep signs simple
 - Fancy designs and changes in font only confuse
 - Use words which will be understood
- (b) Use arrows – directional signs need arrows
- (c) Ensure sign is well-lit
 - But avoid glare from sunlight or artificial light
 - Use matt finishes
- (d) Avoid abbreviations
- (e) Ensure signs are not obstructed or become obstructions themselves
- (f) Consider distance from where sign needs to be read and therefore size of print



² Previously the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

7.1.2 Concise

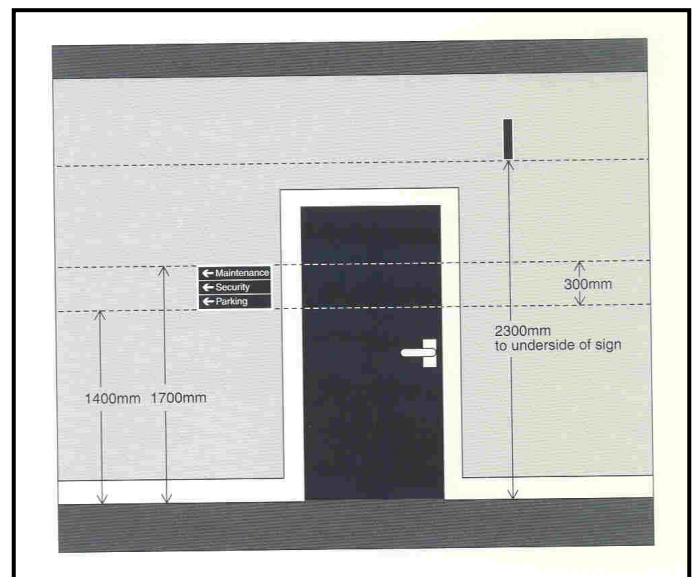
- (a) Keep brief
 - Avoid long lists
 - Avoid complicated instructions
- (b) Use symbols, e.g.

Fire and safety signs are sometimes in mandatory formats:



7.1.3 Consistency

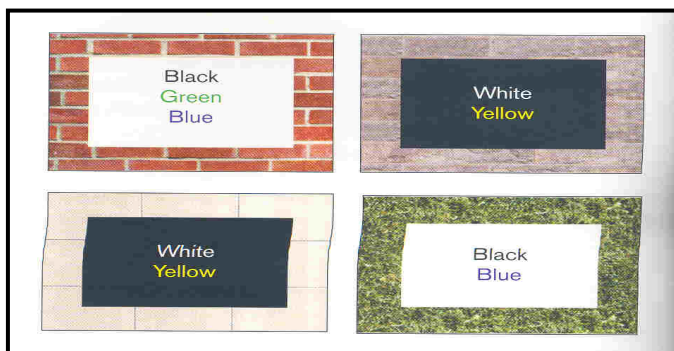
- (a) Use similar sized signs
- (b) Put signs in the same position/location e.g. heights
- (c) use same typeset/font and colours for main signs
 - Sans Serif typefaces such as Arial, Avant Garde and Helvetica have consistent letter thickness and are neither too heavy nor too thin.



- Some of the most legible serifed typefaces include: Baskerville, Bembo, Century Schoolbook and Times New Roman.
- Avoid:

Old English is exaggerated
Italic are not very clear
This face is too condensed
Scripts like this are illegible

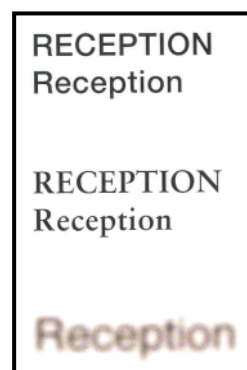
- (g) Colour contrasts should be carefully selected between the background and the signboard and between the signboard and the text or symbol on it. Examples:



7.1.4 Case sensitive

- (h) Avoid using only capitals (uppercase). Words are easier to recognise if lower case letters are used.
- (i) Some words like EXIT are required in capitals by legislation.

Examples have been taken from the Sign Design Guide – a guide to inclusive signage by Peter Barker and June Fraser (illustrator Mark Booth). The Sign Design Guide is available from the Sign Design Society (<https://www.signdesignsociety.co.uk/book/the-sign-design-guide/>), 44 Victoria Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3JA tel: 0203 488 0774, e-mail: enquiries@signdesignsociety.co.uk.



7.2 Noticeboard and publicity

Do your signs and publicity use upper and lower case (as this helps people with dyslexia)? Do you use contrasting colour paper (e.g. black on white or black on pale yellow) on matt paper (as this helps people with dyslexia)? Are your signs clear and at consistent levels?

7.3 Signage

Ideally there should be a consistency with signs around the building and they should be placed at an appropriate height on the wall, so that wheelchair users can read them. There should be use of symbols as these are easy to understand and there should be a mix of upper and lower case for people with dyslexia. The lettering should be contrasting with the background and not cluttered.

8.0 Training and maintenance

Making sure employees and volunteers understand what signs are required and what they mean often requires training. They should be regularly informed about any changes and new people given induction training. It is useful to include in this a review of what signs are in place to make sure they are still relevant and up to date. Try to keep signage simple and not too complicated or confusing, limiting the number of signs and their locations.

It is also important to have a procedure (e.g. walk through building every three months) in place to maintain signs in good condition, and to ensure they can still be read, are clean, unobstructed and lit correctly. Those that are damaged or missing should be replaced quickly.

9.0 Additional information

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Statutory Instrument 2007 No 783. PDF Copies may be downloaded from the website of the Office for Public Sector Information: www.legislation.gov.uk
(http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/783/pdfs/uksi_20070783_en.pdf).

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012. Statutory Instrument 2012 No 2372. PDF Copies may be downloaded from the website of the Office for Public Sector Information: www.legislation.gov.uk
(http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2372/pdfs/uksi_20122372_en.pdf).

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. Statutory Instrument 2021 No 2372. PDF Copies may be downloaded from the website of the Office for Public Sector Information: www.legislation.gov.uk
[The Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/2372/pdfs/uksi_20212372_en.pdf)

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A network of UK disability engaged organisations.