

What are they?

Age-friendly seating and rest areas provide opportunities to recharge along a route, encouraging people to feel that longer journeys are possible because they will be supported along the way. Seating and rest areas provide important opportunities for socialising and engagement that positively impacts the health and wellbeing of people of all ages.

Why do they matter?

Standing or walking for long periods can prevent people from going out, while age-friendly seating and rest areas improves access to activities of daily life, such as a service, health appointment, or spending money in a local business. A choice of age-friendly seating can help foster a greater sense of belonging in a community.

Age-friendly implementation considerations

- Listen to lived experiences** to learn what a diverse range of local residents, including older people, want and need from seating and rest areas spaces. Undertake an access audit with older people / intergenerational groups.
- Identify stakeholders** such as relevant council departments (e.g. planning, public health, environment, parks and community services departments), relevant authorities and local businesses.
- Develop solutions** with residents, stakeholders and local groups to ensure the seating and rest areas are safe and usable for all. Discuss priorities and agree improvements for implementation.

- 1 Location of seats:** Are seats located on routes between home and a destination to allow rest in between, with rest areas every 50m where possible? Are seats located where people expect to wait or linger, such as bus stops, community buildings, town centres, parks, etc.? Are enough seats provided in busy areas? Are there sight lines to seating areas to give people confidence? Do seats face a pleasant/interesting view?
- 2 Social seats:** Are seats designed to enable/encourage socialising (e.g. facing each other, high backs to help acoustics, etc.)?
- 3 Seat dimensions:** A variety of seat heights and widths should be provided. Is there a choice of seat heights between 380-580mm from floor level? If only one seat is provided, is the height 480mm from floor level? Is there a space between arm rests of at least 500mm?
- 4 Wheelchair spaces:** A wheelchair user should be able to sit next to someone and transfer onto a seat. Is a level transfer space at least 1200mm wide located at one end of the seat/bench? This space may also be useful for guide dogs. Arm rests should not be located on the end of a seat where wheelchair users transfer. Is an arm rest set in 500-750mm from the transfer space?
- 5 Back rests:** Are back supports provided at a height of at least 300mm from seat level and at an angle of 90-100 degrees from the seat surface?

- 6 Arm rests:** Arm rests should be provided (except at transfer seats) to help people lower themselves to sit and stand up. Are arm rests provided at a height of 200mm from the surface of the seat? Do they extend from the back support forwards to cover at least 80% of the depth of the seat? Is the arm rest diameter 32-50mm and comfortable to grip?
- 7 Materials:** Seating should be comfortable to touch, made of natural materials where possible, and easy to dry/prevent water pooling if outside. Are the materials selected not too cold, too hot to touch, or too damp?
- 8 Contrast/priority seating:** Do seats and arm rests contrast visually with their surroundings so they are easily identifiable to people who are partially sighted? Is priority seating marked?
- 9 Choice of seating:** A mixture of seating types should be available to suit different people's requirements such as seating for taller or shorter people, for people who want to socialise or for those who need a moment to themselves, and those who want sun or shade. Does the space provide a choice of seating? Are some seats weather protected?
- 10 Maintenance and care:** Are management and maintenance plans in place to ensure the seating and surrounding area is kept clean and usable? Is the community encouraged to care for the local seating and rest areas?

Age-friendly seating and rest areas: top 10 design considerations

		Further reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheels for Wellbeing Guide Benches and Seating in Public Spaces • PAS 6463 Design for the Mind • BS8300 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment • Age-friendly Ireland Seating • Take a Seat initiative • Accessible Seating Review and Inclusive Design Framework. City of York 	

Seating and Rest Areas

No.	Design considerations	Y/N	Issues and actions notes
1 Location of seats			
1.1	Are seats located on routes between home and a destination to allow rest in between, with rest areas every 50m where possible?		
1.2	Are seats located where people expect to wait or linger, such as bus stops, community buildings, town centres, parks, etc.?		
1.3	Are enough seats provided in busy areas?		
1.4	Are there sight lines to seating areas to give people confidence?		
1.5	Do seats face a pleasant/interesting view?		
2 Social seats			
2.1	Are seats designed to enable/encourage socialising (e.g. facing each other, high backs to help acoustics, etc.)?		
3 Seat dimensions			
3.1	Is there a choice of seat heights between 380-580mm from floor level?		
3.2	If only one seat is provided, is the height 480mm from floor level?		
3.3	Is there a space between arm rests of at least 500mm?		
4 Wheelchair spaces			
4.1	Is a level transfer space at least 1200mm wide located at one end of the seat/bench?		
4.2	Is an arm rest set in 500-750mm from the transfer space?		
5 Back rests			
5.1	Are back supports provided at a height of at least 300mm from seat level?		
5.1	Are back supports provided at an angle of 90-100 degrees from the seat surface?		

No.	Design considerations	Y/N	Issues and actions notes
6 Arm rests			
6.1	Are arm rests provided at a height of 200mm from the surface of the seat?		
6.2	Do arm rests extend from the back support forwards to cover at least 80% of the depth of the seat?		
6.3	Is the arm rest diameter 32-50mm?		
6.4	Is the arm rest comfortable to grip?		
7 Materials			
7.1	Are the materials comfortable to touch/sit (e.g. not too cold, too hot, or too damp)?		
7.2	Is this seating made of natural materials where possible?		
8 Contrast and priority seating			
8.1	Do seats and arm rests contrast visually with their surroundings so they are easily identifiable to people who are partially sighted?		
8.2	Is priority seating marked?		
9 Choice of seating			
9.1	Does the space provide a choice of seating to suit different people's requirements (such as seating for taller or shorter people, for people who want to socialise or for those who need a moment to themselves, and those who want sun or shade)?		
9.2	Are some seats weather protected?		
10 Maintenance and care			
10.1	Are management and maintenance plans in place to ensure the seating and surrounding area is kept clean and usable?		
10.2	Is the community encouraged to care for the local seating and rest areas?		