**Checklist – Access to the building**

Whether your church has pews or chairs, you should consider what the seating is like for people living with physical pain conditions, and also for wheelchair users. People who live with chronic pain, a very common hidden disability, often find pews uncomfortable, and difficult to sit in for any length of time. Are some more comfortable chairs available, preferably with arms, as many people find they need these to push themselves up?

Do wheelchair users have the same choice of where they can sit in church as everyone else? They may not find it very welcoming being placed in the aisle or at the very front or the very back of the congregation. We often joke that people in churches always sit in the same place, and consider particular seats to be “theirs”. Whilst it’s great to encourage flexibility in this regard, remember that some people, particularly those on the autism spectrum, may need to have this kind of routine, and making light of it can make them feel stressed or even unsafe.

Some people living with mental health challenges prefer to sit alone, whilst others prefer to have company. Some may become restless, for a variety of reasons. It is important to understand why someone is behaving in the way they are, and not to expect everyone to do the same thing. This requires everyone to show tolerance whilst recognising the impact some behaviour such as shouting can have on others in the congregation.

Consideration should be given to the placing of wheelchair users or people who need to remain seated when others stand and the view they have in such situations.

Here is a checklist of things to bear in mind when thinking about seating in your buildings:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Item to consider | Check when complete/reviewed |
| Are wheelchair users provided with choice where they sit? |  |
| Has consideration been given to people’s needs with regard to seating? |  |
| Can your church cope with people needing to move around the church unexpectedly? |  |
| If everyone stands up, can those who use wheelchairs still see what is happening? |  |

**Further Information**

* Church Care Guidance Note on Seating – [click here](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/ccb_seating_guidance_2018.pdf)