

Purchasing Adult Chairs for Children's Rooms

What is the problem?

The problems and hazards that can arise from the absence of adult chairs, or poor design, in children's rooms involve workers:

- sitting on children's chairs which are too small and too low and may not be secure or stable enough
- sitting on the floor which requires them to use awkward postures and movements to reach and handle items and children
- moving down to the floor and getting up from the floor can involve awkward postures and movements
- adopting these awkward postures for extended periods of time within a day, and repeatedly day after day.

What are the solutions to this problem?

Purchasing adult chairs for use in children's rooms with the following design features may enable your organisation to eliminate or minimise these problems and hazards and reduce injury risks for children's services workers.

Height adjustability with a lower than usual height range

Adult sized chairs for use in children's rooms should be height adjustable so the seat can be moved to the workers' preferred height or different heights according to the different tasks they are performing. Alternatively, if height adjustability is not possible then fixed seats with different heights (eg 350, 380 and 410mm) should be provided to enable workers to choose a seat at their preferred height.



However, the height range of these chairs should be lower than conventional height adjustable (office type) chairs. The lowest height setting should be at least 380mm (to the top of the compressed seat padding) and if possible as low as 350mm. A height range of at least 150mm above the lowest height is recommended.



This chair feature will enable workers to sit closer to a conventional sitting posture, although lower than usually recommended, and operate at lower heights without having to move to and from floor level.

The seat should be easily adjusted by the user so they can change the height as needed or so another worker who starts to use the chair can quickly set it up to their preferred height.

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Adult sized seat with padding

The seat of the chair should be at least 380mm deep and 380mm wide. The ability to adjust the depth of the seat would be an advantage but is not essential.

The seat should be padded to maximise worker comfort.

Use of a backrest

These chairs should have a backrest. The ability to adjust the height of the lumbar support of the backrest would be an advantage so different users can set its height to maximise support for their low back.

It should be possible for a worker to grasp the top of the backrest to move the chair about within the room or between rooms. Without this backrest workers would have to bend or reach down to grasp the seat to move the chair around.

The backrest should also enable the worker to grasp the chair while they are sitting down to help maintain its position and reduce the risk of it suddenly moving before they are sitting on it.

Chair mobility

The chair should have castors on its base so the worker can move about while sitting on it and the chair can be easily moved within the building.

Stability

The chair should be stable when workers move to and from the seat and when they are sitting on it so it doesn't tip or become imbalanced. Usually height adjustable seats require a 5 point base. However with the lower height range of the seat a 4 point base may be suitable.

Maintaining and cleaning

Adult chairs and their components should be easy to clean and require minimal or no maintenance or present any hazards to workers during cleaning or maintenance.

Consulting with employees when purchasing new equipment

The design and use of adult chairs for use in children's rooms can reduce the need for workers to move to and from floor level and work at floor level. To ensure that the chair that you choose effectively manages these risks you must consult with the employees who will be using them. They will be able to give you feedback on any similar items that they have previously used or are still using so you can understand the better design features and those features that are best avoided. They should also be able to help review and provide feedback on new chairs being considered.

Where employees are represented by Health and Safety Representatives, they must be involved in this consultation, with or without the involvement of the employees.



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