

NEW BUILD OR REFURBISHMENT

Accessibility Considerations



INTRODUCTION

“For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 56:7). Through his prophecy, Isaiah reminds us of the importance of accessibility and inclusivity in our synagogues. Further, the Talmud very famously declares “Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh L’Zeh” “All of Israel is responsible for one another.”

These Jewish values combined teaches us that our Shul doors are open to all and we have the responsibility to ensure the frame is wide enough to let everyone in.

We are proud to be living in a time where we support those with additional needs to be enabled and contribute to community no differently than anyone else. However, unfortunately, our buildings are still stuck in the past. When shuls were built, even as recent as 30 years ago, accessibility was generally not taken into account.

It is therefore important that we recognise the opportunity a new build or refurbishment has for those who have previously been unable to participate due to a disability; a new build will be an opportunity to engage in Shul-life, knowing that the site has the accommodations necessary for them to access, feel comfortable and confident.

While it is tempting to base decisions regarding accessibility needs on current members, it is important to build for the future needs of your community.

The accessibility considerations in this guide are based on feedback from people with lived-experience as well as charities in this sector. As described in the title, this list is not comprehensive. We do not address the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, nor do we address the standard best practices of the BS 8300.

The purpose of this guide is to include suggestions that would be beneficial specifically, but not limited to, a Jewish Communal space.

We do encourage you to include your members with lived experience in this process as well.

We hope that you find the guide helpful and informative.

Please contact us with any questions.

CONTACT US

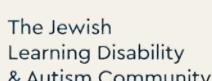
Feel free to contact us for more information and guidance. There may be grants from external organisations for some projects which we can also help find.

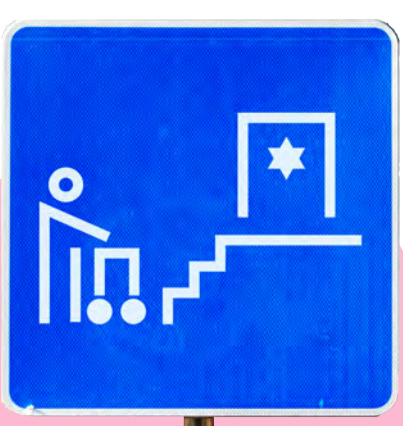
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CLEAR SIGNAGE

Consider planning for signage at the entrance and around the building to clarify where to find different areas and accessible features. Consider large, clear and dyslexia-friendly font. Information referring to emergency procedures and who is who in the community should be displayed in either PECS or Easy Read format.

ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION

Information regarding the weight limit of ramps and lifts should be readily available and easy to access. Ideally, it should be in a place where the user can access the information themselves*.



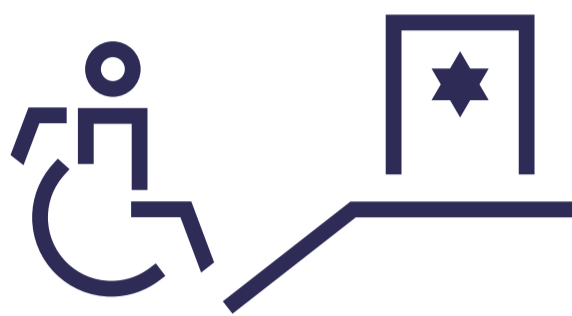
ACOUSTICS

Consider the acoustics of the space. Spaces with high ceilings, no carpets or curtains, hard floors and surfaces can be really noisy, as they reflect the sound, creating extra challenges for people with hearing loss.



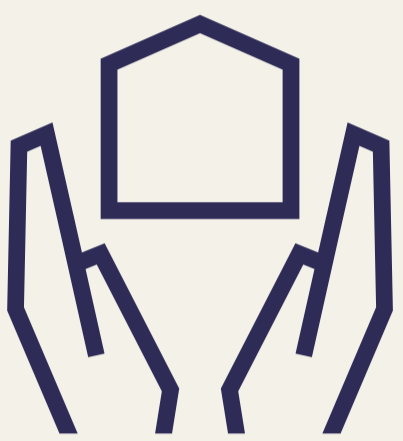
LEVEL ACCESS/LIFT ACCESS

Consider making all spaces for men and women level access including access to the Bimah and Aron. Also consider investing in a reader's table that can be accessed by someone in a wheelchair. If building has more than one level, consider a lift or wheelchair lift.



QUIET ROOM

A quiet room is helpful for those who may become overstimulated in a shul environment. It is a space to decompress until the person is ready to rejoin the other space. Quiet rooms should have low, dimmable lights and if possible, be furnished with soft furnishings such as bean bags.



LED LIGHTING

Many people with sensory issues, light sensitivity and sight loss would benefit from LED lighting (and they help cut energy costs).



ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICE

Assistive listening devices enable those with hearing loss to engage by enabling them to hear their surroundings. The current recommended assistive listening device is a hearing loop, however, technology changes quickly. Please contact us prior to your build/refurb to discuss the best assistive listening technology for your site which may be better for the users as well as more cost-effective

DESIGNATED WHEELCHAIR AREA

Consider allocating designated space for wheelchairs in both men and women's sections. Modular seating is recommended for this reason.



COVERED "PARKING" AREA FOR MOBILITY SCOOTERS AND BUGGIES

A covered area designated to park mobility scooters, wheelchairs, and buggies will encourage those who use them to attend synagogue/events, knowing they and their very expensive equipment have been considered.

DESIGNATED FRONT ROW

Consider putting in a row in front of where the rabbi gives his sermon for those who would benefit from moving closer when he addresses the community. Consider how this will be done for the Ladies' section as well.

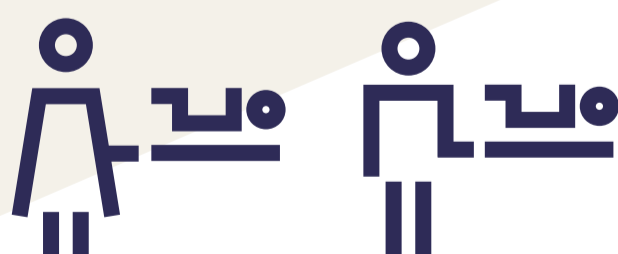


CHANGING PLACES TOILETS

Consider installing a Changing Places Toilet. These toilets are essential for those with restricted mobility who need equipment to help them either get on the toilet or be changed.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARENTS WITH BABIES

Consider including a nappy changing space that both men and women can access. Consider including a designated space for nursing mothers.



FIRE DOORS

All doorways should be wide enough for a wheelchair to comfortably fit through. Fire doors are very heavy and therefore difficult to open for some. They should therefore remain opened until activated by an alarm. Consider weight of bathroom doors for this reason as well.

ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT

Consider hiring an accessibility consultant. While it may mean more upfront costs, hiring a professional who can navigate the legal requirements and standard best practices will enable you to do the job correctly the first time and not have to spend money later to make changes (i.e. ramps that were the wrong incline or accessibility features not fit for purpose). Please contact us regarding potential grants from external charities.



*For resources on choosing the correct ramp, please check out www.theramppeople.co.uk