

HTP Seating Focus Group - Overview

The HTP seating evaluation focus group, held on 23 June 2026, generated a substantial volume of feedback, with sample seating provided by four suppliers and participation from both members of the public and Trust staff members.

Measure	Result
Total respondents	27
Public respondents	14
Staff respondents	13
Seating items reviewed	52
Individual item review records captured	457

Suppliers

Four suppliers brought a range of seating items for staff and the public to review, including seating suitable for waiting areas, wards, paediatric areas, mental health rooms, and many more applications. The seating was scored on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being high, to evaluate comfort, quality, and looks. The average scores for all products from each supplier are detailed here, including an overall score, before taking a closer look at some of the feedback received.

Supplier	Average Comfort	Average Quality	Average Looks	Overall Average*
Knightsbridge	4.05	4.29	4.32	4.22
Pineapple	3.46	3.99	3.87	3.77
Teal	3.50	3.93	3.86	3.77
Bristol Maid	3.04	4.00	3.82	3.59

Knightsbridge: Comments frequently highlighted comfort, supportive padding and the benefit of arm rests. Several participants described the seating as suitable for waiting and patient areas. Some staff raised concerns regarding upholstery details, stitching and ease of cleaning.

Pineapple: Participants recognised innovative and adaptable furniture designs, including specialist products for specific care environments. Staff comments frequently referenced cleaning challenges associated with gaps, joins and more complex furniture construction.

Teal: Products were often praised for their functionality, adjustability and specialist clinical features. Several staff members identified potential applications in patient care and transport

settings. Concerns focused mainly on the complexity of some mechanisms and potential maintenance considerations.

Bristol Maid: Feedback suggested a practical healthcare furniture range with well-regarded recliner and patient seating options. The most common criticism related to firmness and a perceived lack of padding when compared with other suppliers.

Feedback summary

Both members of the public and members of staff were given the opportunity to provide feedback on each item, in addition to the numerical ratings. These comments have been analysed and summarised here.

Overview

Public participants consistently prioritised comfort and user experience when assessing seating options. There was a clear preference for well-padded chairs with supportive backs and arm rests, particularly in waiting areas. Comfort was closely linked to cushioning, back support and ease of sitting and standing. Participants focused on how seating would feel when unwell, in pain or awaiting treatment, rather than operational considerations. Feedback also recognised that different users have different needs, highlighting the value of offering a range of seating options. Overall, comfort, support and accessibility were identified as the key considerations for patient-facing areas.

Staff participants assessed seating from both patient experience and operational perspectives. While comfort remained important, feedback often focused on cleanability, infection prevention, durability and maintenance. Concerns were frequently raised about features that could affect cleaning, such as seams, stitching and gaps. Staff also considered suitability across different healthcare settings and highlighted the need to meet a range of accessibility requirements. Overall, preferred seating solutions were those that balanced patient comfort with the practical demands of a healthcare environment.

Accessibility

A key theme that came out of both the public and staff feedback was accessibility; these comments have been summarised here.

Arm rests were repeatedly identified as an important aid to sitting and standing.

Participants frequently commented that arm rests made chairs easier to use and improved independence. There was a particular preference for **flat arm rests that are parallel to the floor**, rather than rounded designs, as these were considered more supportive when pushing up from a seated position.

A range of seating heights is needed. Respondents recognised that people vary significantly in height, mobility and physical ability, and highlighted the importance of providing seating at different heights. One participant suggested using different colours to identify different seat heights.

Bariatric provision should form part of the seating strategy. Staff comments specifically highlighted the need to ensure suitable seating is available for larger patients, rather than relying solely on standard seating options.

Consideration should be given to people living with dementia or visual impairment. Staff highlighted the importance of colour contrast and inclusive design features that support navigation, recognition and safe use of furniture.

Waiting areas should accommodate wheelchair users and accompanying relatives. Public feedback highlighted the importance of incorporating gaps within seating layouts so wheelchair users can remain alongside family members and carers rather than being separated from them.

IPC and patient safety considerations

IPC was one of the most consistent themes within the staff feedback and was raised across multiple suppliers and chair types. While comfort and support were important, staff repeatedly emphasised that seating must also withstand the demands of a healthcare environment.

Key IPC Themes

- **Ease of cleaning was a major consideration.** Staff favoured furniture that could be cleaned thoroughly and efficiently, particularly in high-use clinical areas.
- **Seams, stitching and upholstery details were frequently highlighted as potential risks,** with concerns that dirt could accumulate or materials could become damaged over time.
- **Gaps, joins and sectional furniture attracted repeated comments,** particularly where staff felt these features could trap dirt, dust or debris and make cleaning more difficult.
- **Furniture needed to withstand healthcare cleaning products,** including chlorine-based cleaning regimes. Staff specifically highlighted the importance of materials and finishes being suitable for regular cleaning and disinfection.
- **The ability to clean underneath furniture was considered important,** particularly for larger seating products and chairs used in clinical environments.
- **Complex or heavily featured designs generated more IPC concerns** than simpler furniture, particularly where additional surfaces, mechanisms or structural elements created extra cleaning requirements.

Patient safety considerations centred on transfer support, adjustability, dementia-friendly features and specialist mental health requirements. Teal Item 31 (recliner) was the strongest example of safety-focused seating, attracting positive comments regarding patient stability, dementia care and transport functionality. Pineapple Item 18 (electric recliner) was praised for its adjustability, while Pineapple Item 11 was recognised for its ligature-free design. The most common concerns related to low seating that could make standing difficult, potential pressure care risks and the need to support safe patient transfers.

Seating – best overall scores

Seating scores are compiled and analysed here, with the average for each category being rolled into an overall average to provide a table of the top 20 overall seating options out of the 52 that were reviewed. A closer look at seating for specialist applications follows.

Item	Picture	Supplier	Reviews	Comfort	Quality	Looks	Overall
18		Pineapple	8	4.88	4.75	4.62	4.75
9		Knightsbridge	10	4.56	4.75	4.67	4.65
3		Knightsbridge	19	4.32	4.39	4.44	4.38
31		Teal	18	4.12	4.56	4.31	4.33
8		Knightsbridge	19	4.21	4.28	4.47	4.32
45		Bristol Maid	12	4.17	4.5	4.18	4.27

7		Knightsbridge	14	4.29	4.31	4.14	4.24
20		Pineapple	11	4	4.2	4.3	4.17
1		Knightsbridge	12	4	4.4	4.1	4.16
2		Knightsbridge	13	4.17	4.27	4	4.14
30		Teal	8	4	4.14	4.29	4.14
33		Teal	14	4	4.15	4.15	4.1

12		Pineapple	9	4	4.14	4	4.05
23		Pineapple	10	4	4	4.1	4.03
22		Pineapple	16	4	4.07	3.87	3.98
39		Teal	10	3.9	3.9	4	3.93
34		Teal	9	3.67	4.11	3.89	3.89
25		Pineapple	8	3.57	4	4.14	3.89

13		Pineapple	11	3.75	4.12	3.75	3.88
26		Pineapple	11	3.64	3.91	4	3.85

A&E/ED Bench style seating

Item	Picture	Supplier	Reviews	Avg Comfort	Avg Quality	Avg Looks	Overall Score
21		Pineapple	18	2.5	3.82	3.88	3.41
43		Bristol Maid	9	1.57	3.4	3.22	2.79

Participants viewed **Item 21** as a practical and durable waiting-area seating solution. Positive feedback highlighted its suitability for high-capacity areas, ease of cleaning, durability and integrated table. However, concerns focused on comfort during prolonged waits, particularly in Emergency Departments, as well as the lack of arm rests and limited back support. Participants also noted that the table could be used as additional seating during busy periods, with Health & Safety highlighting the importance of confirming its Safe Working Load.

Positive feedback for **Item 43** highlighted its supportive design and suitability for short-duration use, with some participants feeling it offered better support than expected. However, concerns centred on comfort, with many describing the seat as hard and unsuitable for prolonged waiting. Several staff members preferred the alternative ED-style seating option (Item 21), and some felt Item 43 may be less suitable for people experiencing pain, reduced mobility or musculoskeletal conditions.

Waiting chairs

Item	Picture	Supplier	Reviews	Comfort	Quality	Looks	Overall Score
9		Knightsbridge	10	4.56	4.75	4.67	4.65
3		Knightsbridge	19	4.32	4.39	4.44	4.38
8		Knightsbridge	19	4.21	4.28	4.47	4.32
7		Knightsbridge	14	4.29	4.31	4.14	4.24
20		Pineapple	11	4	4.2	4.3	4.17
1		Knightsbridge	12	4	4.4	4.1	4.16

2		Knightsbridge	13	4.17	4.27	4	4.14
30		Teal	8	4	4.14	4.29	4.14
23		Pineapple	10	4	4	4.1	4.03
22		Pineapple	16	4	4.07	3.87	3.98

Item 9 achieved the highest overall score among mainstream waiting chairs and was repeatedly described as comfortable, well-padded and suitable for waiting-room environments. Comments such as "really comfortable" and "good comfort" were common, suggesting strong agreement among participants.

Item 3 was specifically identified as being suitable for medium-term waiting spaces and attracted numerous positive comments about comfort, lumbar support and versatility. Participants described it as comfortable and supportive, while staff recognised its suitability across a range of healthcare settings. It was also one of the most heavily reviewed chairs in the exercise, giving additional confidence in the ratings.

Item 8 attracted consistently positive feedback from both staff and public participants. Comments referred to comfort, good arm rests, appearance and suitability for clinic or waiting room use. It scored highly across all three categories and was one of the most frequently reviewed items.

While often described as a bedside chair, **Item 7** also received strong feedback regarding comfort, support and suitability for prolonged sitting. It may have potential for waiting areas where greater support is required.

Item 20 was viewed differently from the Knightsbridge chairs. Participants associated it more with visitor, family and relatives' areas than with mainstream waiting rooms. It scored well and was considered comfortable, but its sofa-style design suggests it may be better suited to informal waiting environments.

Recliners

Item	Picture	Supplier	Reviews	Comfort	Quality	Looks	Overall Score
18		Pineapple	8	4.88	4.75	4.62	4.75
31		Teal	18	4.12	4.56	4.31	4.33
45		Bristol Maid	12	4.17	4.5	4.18	4.27

Item 18 was the standout recliner in the evaluation, achieving the highest overall score and receiving consistently positive feedback from both staff and public participants. Comments highlighted its comfort, adjustability and suitability for patients who may spend extended periods seated. Several staff members also identified potential benefits within maternity and birthing environments.

Item 31 combined strong comfort ratings with extensive clinical functionality. Staff comments described it as a versatile patient chair with applications in transport, dementia care and ward settings. It was particularly valued for its adaptability and practical healthcare features, making it one of the most highly regarded specialist chairs in the exercise.

Item 45 was viewed as a straightforward and comfortable manual recliner. Participants praised its support and comfort, particularly for longer periods of sitting, while staff identified it as a practical and easy-to-use reclining option. It lacked some of the specialist functionality of the Teal chair but was generally viewed as a strong all-round recliner.

Specialist seating

Item	Picture	Specialist Function	Reviews	Comfort	Quality	Looks	Overall Score
11		Ligature-free recliner / Mental Health Room seating	12	2.5	3.67	3.56	3.23
13		Anti-ligature beanbag / Sensory seating	11	3.33	3.71	3.67	3.57
17		Reinforced anti-throw tub chair	5	3.75	4.25	4	4
26		Anti-stash / Anti-concealment chair	11	3.64	3.91	4	3.85
19		Modular seating	11	3.45	3.91	3.55	3.61

All the highest scoring specialist seating was supplied by **Pineapple**.

Item 11 was praised for improving dignity and comfort within ligature-free mental health rooms and allowing patients to rest or sleep more comfortably. Some participants felt it was large and highly specialised.

Item 13 was suggested for sensory rooms, mental health settings and potentially birthing environments. Main concerns related to the difficulty some users may have with getting in and out of the chair.

Item 17 was described as a reinforced anti-throw tub chair. Viewed as robust and relatively comfortable for a specialist product, with availability in larger seating configurations. Some concerns were raised about seat height and arm height.

Item 26 was identified as being suitable where reducing opportunities to conceal items is important. Positive comments focused on design and purpose, while staff raised concerns regarding cleaning and items becoming trapped within the chair structure.

Item 19 was viewed primarily as a flexible, modular solution for paediatric, communal or informal spaces, with adaptability being its strongest feature. However, staff raised recurring concerns regarding infection prevention and cleaning around the joins between modules.

Office chairs

Item	Picture	Supplier	Reviews	Comfort	Quality	Looks	Overall Score
51		Bristol Maid	1	5	5	5	5
37		Teal	5	3	2.75	2.5	2.75

General comment on office chairs regarding DSE requirements: “if we standardise to a higher back operator chair with adjustable height and arms and inflatable lumbar support, we might almost eliminate 'special' chair purchases.”

Item 37 - Participants recognised its role as an office chair, but comments suggested improvements were needed around comfort and usability.

Item 51 received only one formal review, but it was the clearest endorsement of any office chair in the exercise. It was explicitly identified as the preferred office chair.

Conclusions

What does ‘good’ look like?

A well-padded, sturdy chair with supportive lumbar and back support, armrests that aid standing, suitable seat height, easy-clean surfaces and comfort for prolonged waiting times. Different heights should be available across the estate to meet different patient needs.

What to avoid?

Avoid hard or minimally padded seating, very low chairs, chairs without supportive armrests, low-back designs, excessively deep or oversized seats, difficult-to-clean construction, and any furniture that feels unstable or flimsy.

Overarching message:

Comfort, support and accessibility matter more than appearance. People overwhelmingly preferred padded chairs with supportive backs and armrests, while staff additionally emphasised cleanability, durability and suitability for a wide range of patient sizes and abilities.

Next Steps

The HTP team is now working with the Trust Procurement Nurse and with teams throughout the Trust, starting in Critical Care and repeating throughout the areas that will need new seating for the move into the new building at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, to trial preferred seating options from the focus group.

A children and young people's seating focus group will be held in September to generate shortlists for these respective areas as well. The Trust's Youth Engagement Panel will participate, and an open invite will go out to children and young people in the community, the session will be held in the children's outpatient department in Princess Royal Hospital.

Once a range of options have been trialled throughout the areas that will be affected, the results will be reviewed alongside financial considerations to make final decisions on seating procurement for the Hospitals Transformation Programme.