

Chill Out Zone Guide

How to facilitate a sensory rest-stop and quiet place at events - a space to go when the fun of the event becomes too much



Alternative formats

This document is available in alternative formats on request including electronically by email or through the City website, in hard copy in large or standard print and text only. For further information please contact Community Development at the City of Mandurah on (08) 9550 3256 or cdo@mandurah.wa.gov.au

This Chill Out Zone guide has been developed by the City of Mandurah in collaboration with a local therapy provider and a local person who has autism.

The City of Mandurah supports 'person-first' language (i.e. a person who has autism) which has been used throughout this guide. The City acknowledges and respects the preference of some people who have autism who use 'identity-first' language (i.e. the autistic person).

Introduction to the Chill Out Zone Guide

The aim of this guide is to support community members, groups and event organisers to facilitate inclusive events through the provision of a Chill Out Zone so that people who have sensory needs feel welcomed and included at community events.

This guide can be used by event organisers to create a space that suits the needs of people attending the event. It includes ideas for the zone and items that can be used in the space.

Many events around Perth have already adopted a 'chill out' space and/or created quiet hours to help people with sensory challenges to access their community with ease. For example:

- Coles and Woolworths have quiet shopping hours
- Sensitive Santa at certain shopping centres around Perth
- Sensory Friendly Flicks at Grand Cinemas
- Quiet hour and Chill Out Zones at Perth Royal Show

Quiet spaces and times are designed to limit sensory input by reducing noise including voice overs and background noise, and lighting such as turning off every second set of lights.

What is a Chill Out Zone?

A Chill Out Zone creates a quiet space for people to use if they need a break from the event. Information about the location and purpose of the space should be included in promotions and information about the event. For example, on promotional flyers, event maps, website and social media. These details could be included under a heading of 'accessibility' relating to the event.

Why have a Chill Out Zone?

Some people have difficulties with sensory regulation in loud and unpredictable environments (i.e. community events). A Chill Out Zone provides a quiet space for people to visit so they can regulate their sensory needs before heading back to the event.

Without access to a quiet space some people may need to leave the event early or avoid it all together, limiting their engagement with community activities.

Sensory processing is the way people process information from their senses including taste, smell, sight, sound, touch and proprioception (knowing where your hands are in relation to your body and how joints move in space). People of all ages can experience sensory challenges.



Everyone processes information differently and has different thresholds. For some people a little bit of information feels like a lot. Think about finding a car park – do you turn the radio off? Imagine if you didn't turn the radio off, can you concentrate, or do you feel your anxiety rising? People with sensory difficulties often need less input to reach their optimal level of alertness – a time when they can interact, enjoy and participate. If sensory information becomes too much, people may become distressed, anxious, overwhelmed and/or shutdown. A person who has challenges with sensory input may experience a sensory overload which can trigger a fight, flight or freeze response which the person may not be able to control.

How does a Chill Out Zone work?

A Chill Out Zone provides a reduced stimulation environment that allows people to calm, relax, re-organise and refocus before being able to re-enter and enjoy the the event.

The space should be an accessible area where people can spend time relaxing without time or participation restrictions. There should be no age limits to the space and people should be able come and go as they need.



How to create a Chill Out Zone

To create an inclusive, calming and accessible space aim to consider the five senses: sight, touch, sound, taste and smell. Think about what you like to do when relaxing – do you listen to music, sit in comfortable chairs, use fragrance sprays/oils, tinker with a fidget toy, game, cushion?

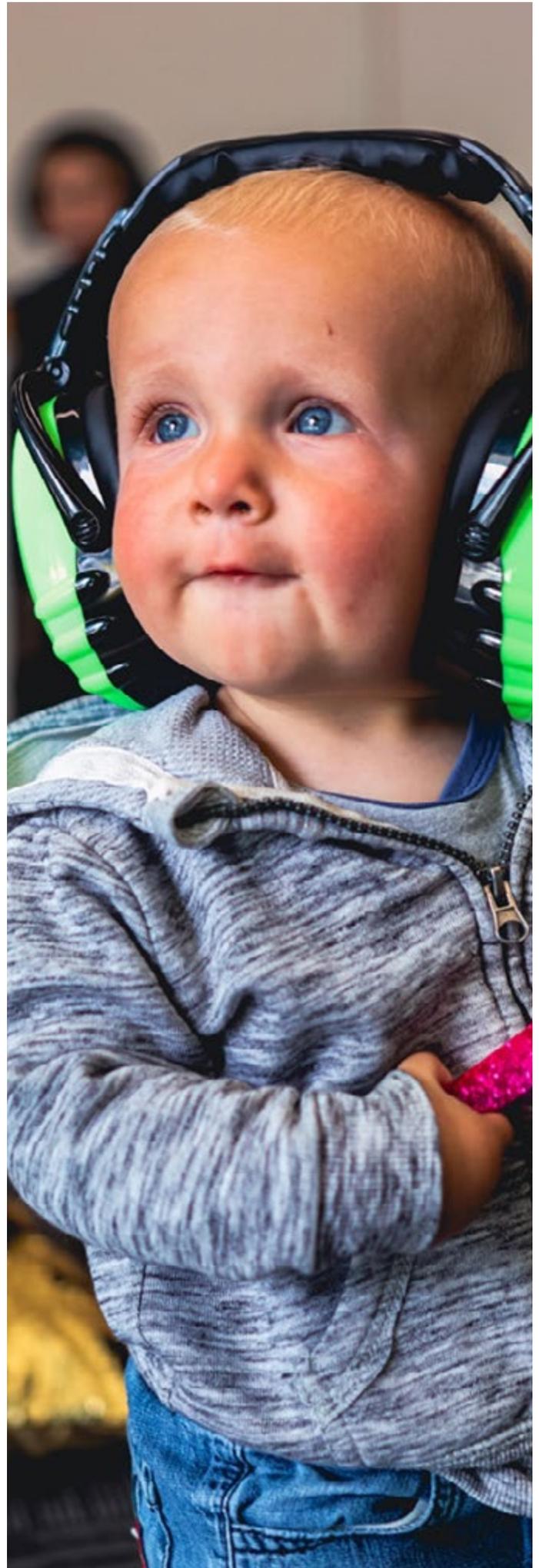
Some activities can also include a social element and this may increase the enjoyment of participants as they interact with others including family members and friends in a relaxing and calming environment. This can include large format games such as Jenga and Connect Four.

Consider the layout of the space to provide a welcoming, quiet and calming area for people who are sensory avoiding and for people who are sensory seeking by providing sensory tools such as a stress ball.

Ensure that people know what the space is for by having a clear sign out the front of the area. Local community members and groups can hire a Chill Out Zone sign from the City of Mandurah. Details on how to hire equipment are included below.

Allocate event staff or volunteers to stay or monitor the area to keep the space clean and tidy and provide support for a friendly and welcoming space.

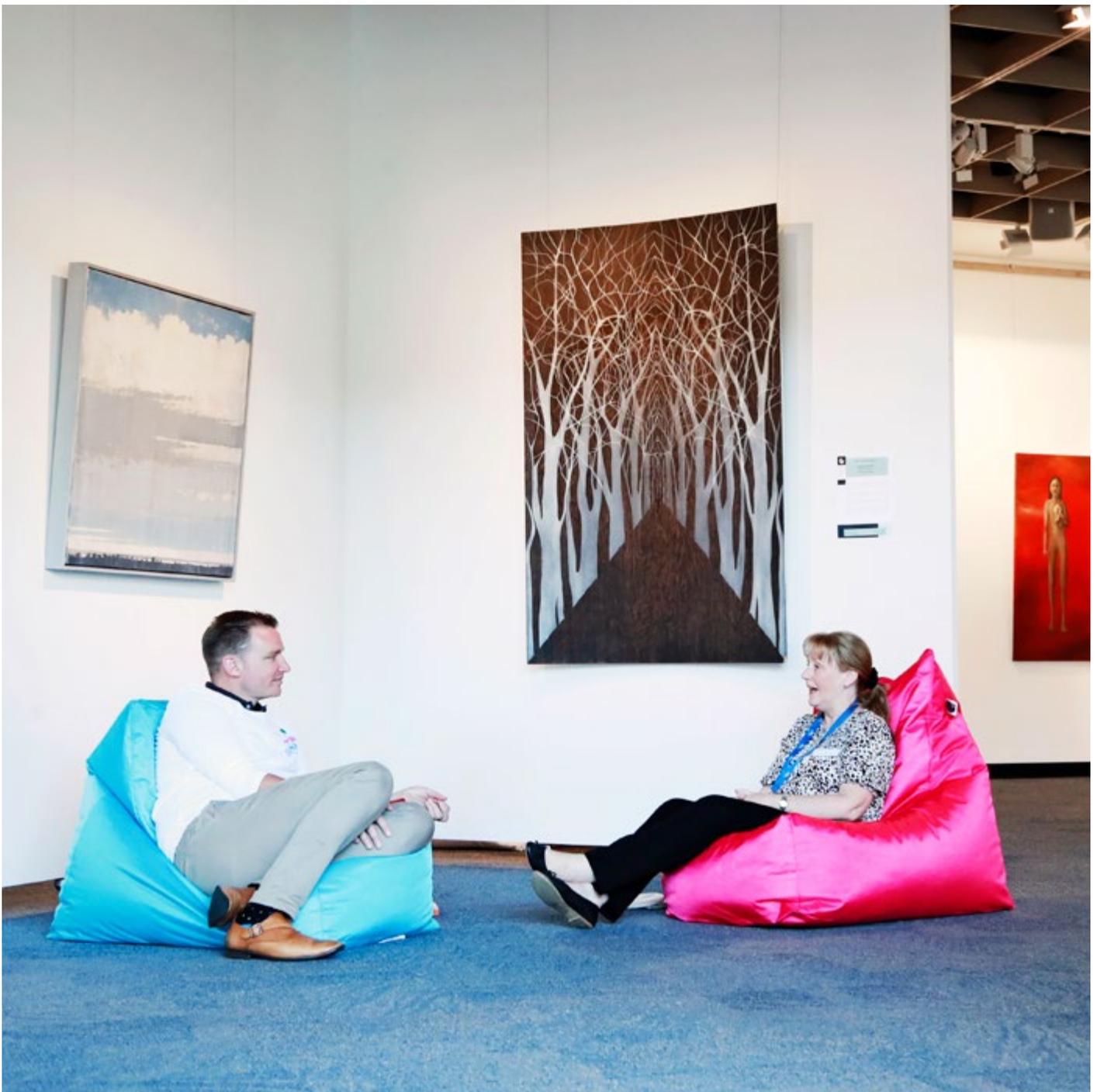
Local service providers and community groups could be involved in the facilitation of a Chill Out Zone. A list to local service providers can be found at mandurah.wa.gov.au/disabilitysupportservices.



A Chill Out Zone can be provided with even the smallest of budgets through simply identifying a quiet space with shade, adding a sign to the space so that people know what the area is for and providing some comfortable seating options. Local discount stores and retail chains are great places to purchase tubs, artificial grass and plants, cushions and a range of toys to include in a Chill Out Zone.

Things to consider when planning a Chill Out Zone

Before setting up a space, it is beneficial to know the target audience who will attend the event and the layout of the event (where tents, food vans, stages, speakers will be located) to ensure that the Chill Out Zone/quiet space is suitable for the purpose of the space (i.e. creating a quiet space for people to recharge).



What to consider when planning to provide a Chill Out Zone at an event:



1. The demographic of people accessing the event.

- Who is the target audience for the event
i.e. children, young adults, older adults or adults only?
- What is the risk of harm for attendees using the Chill Out Zone? For example, older adults using beanbags and low chairs and younger children swallowing small items.

2. The physical set up of the event.

- Availability of covered tents, marquees, open spaces.

3. The number of people attending the event at one time.

4. The 'stay ability' of the people attending the event.

- Can people come and go from the event or is it ticketed and they are most likely to remain the whole day, i.e. pressure to stay.

5. Is there a space that is away from the main event, i.e. away from the musical stage?

6. How will attendees know that there is a Chill Out Zone/quiet space available at the event (i.e. signage, information added to flyers and website)?

- Hygiene maintenance, for example availability of hand sanitiser and can items be easily wiped down?

7. Is there power to the site?

8. Will the Chill Out Zone require volunteers to welcome people and to keep the area clean and tidy?

- Organise staff/volunteers to check that the space is clean and tidy and sanitise required surfaces.
- Will volunteers require a Working with Children Check (WWC)?
Click here for more information about a WWC
<https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au/index>

9. Accessibility for a Chill Out Zone.

- Ensure that the space is welcoming, accessible and inclusive by considering the following questions:
- Is the internal space accessible (for people who use mobility aides such as wheelchairs and walkers)?
- Are the entrances/exits flush?
- Are there cords/wires that need to be taped down?
- Is the space suitable for the weather (rain/heat)?
- Have contrasting colours been used throughout the area to support people with low vision?
- Are there various seating options for people who may not be able to get up and down from a low bean bag?



Resources available for hire through the City of Mandurah

The City of Mandurah have some resources available for community groups to hire free of charge to support groups to provide a Chill Out Zone at community events. Items include bean bags, signage and ear muffs. For more information please contact the Community Capacity Building team by email cdo@mandurah.wa.gov.au.

When contacting the City to hire Chill Out Zone equipment please specify the date/s that you would like to collect the items and the date that the items will be returned. Equipment can be hired free of charge for a maximum of four days. Equipment is collected and returned to Lakelands Library (49 Banksiadale Gate, Lakelands). If hiring bean bags please consider the room in the vehicle being used to collect the bags. Please note that library staff are not able to leave the library to assist by taking equipment out to vehicles.

Equipment available for free hire to community groups include:

- 6 x bean bags,
- 2 x tear drop flags (great for outdoor events),
- 2 x bases for tear drop flags
- 1 x pull up banner (best for indoor events),
- ear muffs, and an
- outdoor rug

You may also like to provide some colouring in pages and pencils in a Chill Out Zone. A simple web search will support you to find free colouring in pages to download with just about any theme required.

You may also like to download the Embrace a Space Guide and Template Kit through clicking on this link <https://www.mandurah.wa.gov.au/-/media/files/com/downloads/community/programs-and-activities/embrace-a-space-guide-and-template-kit.pdf>. Embrace a Space is an easy to follow, step-by-step guide to encourage community members to come together and care for their favourite spaces.

Example Set-ups for a Chill Out Zone

Example one: Local outdoor market under a 4m x 4m marquee

- Seating space – 2-3 beanbags or chairs
- Trestle table with table top activities
- Artificial plants
- Stand near the entrance with sun cream, hand sanitiser, tissues
- Large format games at the front of the marquee



Example Two: Large event under a 6m x 6m marquee

1. Quiet corner

- Black material covering a back corner 2m each side
- String lights along the black material
- Beanbags/chairs and cushions
- Table with available sensory items
- Relaxing music
- Floor mat and wall coverings (this can be sound absorbing)

2. Tactile corner

- Table with sensory activities
- Pencil and paper activities – drawing, colouring, word sleuths
- Water play station
- Large format games at the front of the tent (allowing for accessibility into the marquee)
- Stand near the entrance with sun cream, hand sanitiser, tissues
- Artificial plants dotted around
- Seating area with cushions

Example Three: Outdoor event 4m x 4m space under a tree

- Floor mats with beanbags/chairs with cushions under the tree
- Table with sensory activities
- Large format games
- Stand near the entrance with sun cream, hand sanitiser, tissues

Key points to remember when providing a Chill Out Zone

- Consider who will be attending the event and the layout of the event.
- Is the space useable for people who need a quiet space?
- Is the space accessible and inclusive for all?
- Think about what items you already have available to use, i.e. chairs, beanbags, cushions.
- Think about the hygiene and safety risks of the items used.



How can success of a Chill Out Zone be measured?

This guide has been made available to support organisers of community events to create a Chill Out Zone for people who have sensory challenges – and in doing so, making events more inclusive for everyone to enjoy.

Success can be measured by how well used the space is throughout the event and through simply asking people if the space supported people to experience a greater level of enjoyment at the event and/or stay longer at the event.

A Chill Out Zone will usually be a space that is enjoyed by lots of people attending an event who may not identify as a person who has a disability. Providing a Chill Out Zone is a great way to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere at any event.

Online resources

- **What does sensory overload look like videos**

<https://vimeo.com/52193530> and https://youtu.be/DgDR_gYk_a8

- **Guidelines for creating autistic inclusive environments**

[https://www.autismcrc.com.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/Guidelines%20for%20Creating%20Autistic%20Inclusive%20Environments%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.autismcrc.com.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/Guidelines%20for%20Creating%20Autistic%20Inclusive%20Environments%20(002).pdf)

https://youtu.be/DgDR_gYk_a8 and <https://vimeo.com/52193530>

- **Your reactions can make the difference (video and resources)**

<https://changeyourreactions.com/change-your-reactions/>

- **Understand autism**

<https://www.amaze.org.au/understand-autism/>





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If you need help to speak or listen on the phone you can use the National Relay Service on 1300 555 727.

For more information visit: relayservice.gov.au

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