

# HOW TO FUTURE-PROOF TENANT BATHROOMS

Learn how to create beautiful, long-lasting bathrooms  
that work – no matter what the age or requirement of  
your tenants or housing stock

*by*

**AKW**<sup>®</sup>



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“If I want to be alone,  
some place I can write,  
I can read, I can pray,  
I can cry, I can do  
whatever I want -  
I go to the bathroom.”

Alicia Keys, Singer

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## INTRODUCTION

Providing affordable, safe, good quality homes for people to thrive in is top of every social landlord's to-do-list. However, juggling budgets to accommodate day-to-day and future tenant demands can be difficult to say the least.

An area that can be particularly challenging is the bathroom space. This is because once it is fitted, it needs to last for many years to be cost-effective.

Here we will be taking a snapshot look at tenant opinions of their bathrooms and the challenges that housing association managers are juggling. We will also be asking what an intelligently designed bathroom looks like and how, with some forethought, it is possible to create beautiful, cost-effective, future-proofed bathroom spaces.



# WHAT DO TENANTS AND HOUSING ASSOCIATION MANAGERS WANT?

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It is often the smallest room in a property, yet the bathroom is one of the most frequently used. So, what is important to housing association managers, contractors and tenants when it comes to specifying, installing and using bathrooms?

According to recent qualitative research carried out by AKW with a selection of housing association managers, they see the top five concerns as:

	<b>Housing Association Managers</b>	<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Contractors</b>
1	Looks good	Looks good	Product availability
2	Low maintenance	Easy to clean	Speed of installation
3	Fit and forget	Excellent quality	Aftercare and aftersales support
4	Future-proof	Long lasting	Warranties of the products
5	Safe	Safe	Everything from one supplier

## HOUSING ASSOCIATION MANAGER PRIORITIES:



“Key to us is the quality of the product and the quality of the installation”



“Speed of installation is our focus. Although the look and all that la-di-da is important, as long as it's quick to install and looks modern that's all that matters really”



“Design is at the forefront of what we are looking for in new builds”

# THE GREAT BALANCING ACT

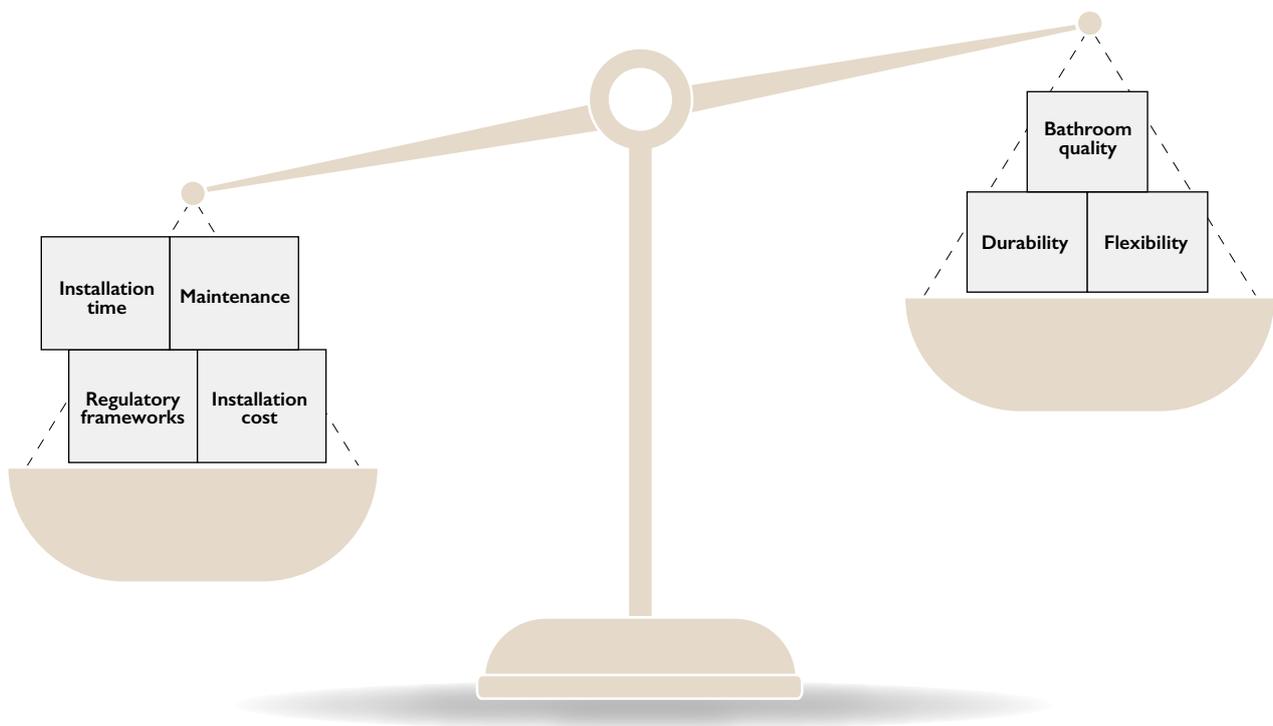
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Most social housing bathrooms are expected to last up to 30 years and during this time they see a lot of daily use.

It is no surprise therefore that according to research by maintenance management solution provider Fixflo, toilets figure as one of the top five most common household repair requests from tenants.

Another issue that needs to be balanced is the need to refresh the bathroom space for incoming tenants. This might just be in the form of cleaning, or the space might need more major work carried out, such as tile or bathroom furniture replacement.

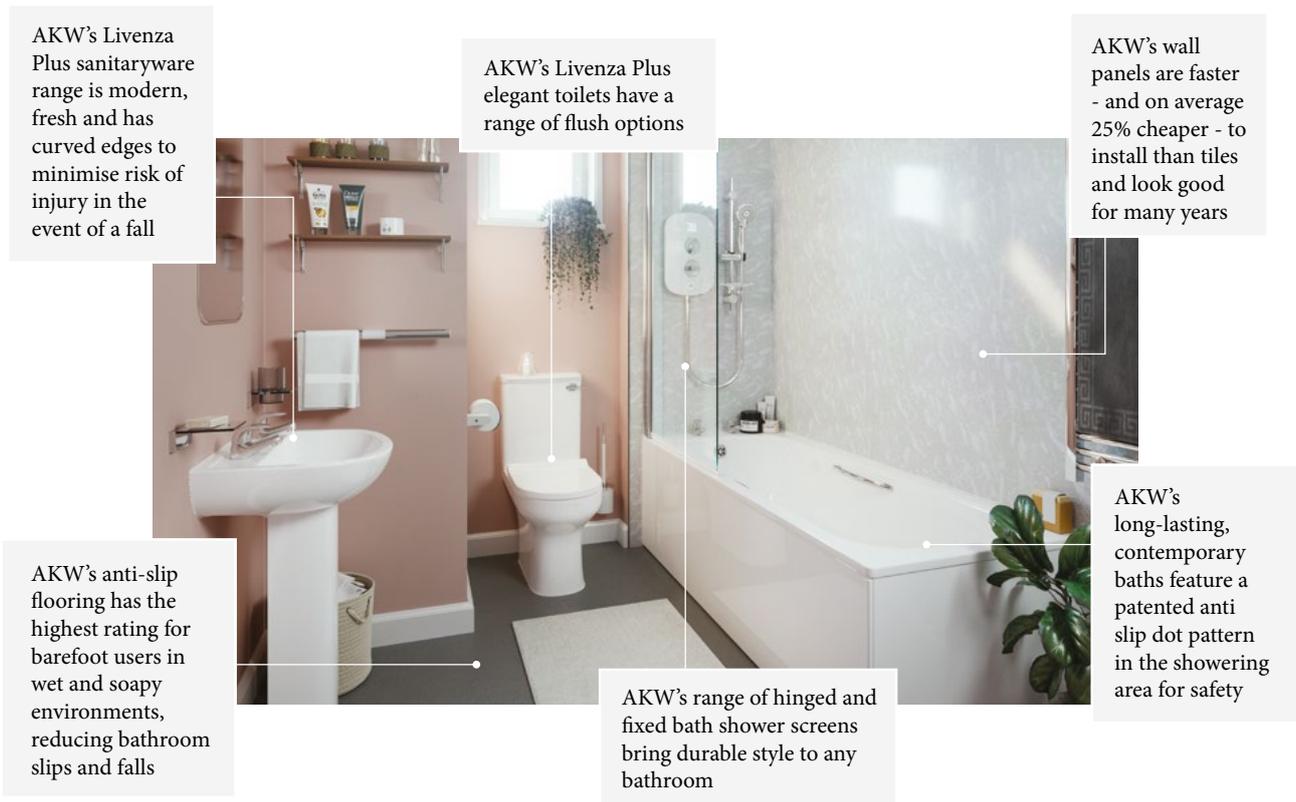
It is no surprise therefore that the 'holy grail' of bathrooms in a housing association setting is one that doesn't date, is long-lasting and versatile and requires limited maintenance.



# BATHROOM PAIN POINTS



## Overcoming the pain points



# BATHROOM DESIGN 101

## Things to think about

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Charles Turner, Head of Design at ArtiCAD Ltd, a bathroom and kitchen designer for the last 12 years, is the one responsible for designing AKW's Beautiful Bathrooms housing association focused room sets. Here he gives some food for thought when it comes to creating the perfect bathroom space:

**The best designs** - are those that fit the customer's brief, but which also incorporate at least one 'sizzle' item - a design feature or product that will enrich the customer's experience each time they use the room.

**The biggest mistake** - is a poor use of space, where practical considerations and enjoyment of the space are often overlooked. Examples are out of reach heated towel rails and lack of storage so cleaning products are on view.

**Maximising space** - The aim is for the space to deliver joy and space optimisation is key to this. I often install sliding doors to eliminate the need for a door opening space. You'd be surprised by how effective this simple solution is.

**Not forgetting the basics** - A beautiful design is useless if the products or their positioning won't work with the client's plumbing set up or hot water system, or if the cost of relocating plumbing/pipework takes the project way over budget.

**Keeping tenants happy** - Creating a design that is easy for the tenant to maintain and clean is important to their enjoyment of the space. Fortunately, AKW offers an extensive selection of styles and solutions for the designer to choose from, so obtaining tenant buy-in to the design and refurbishment process is made much easier.

# TRANSLATING 'TRENDS' INTO LONG-LASTING TENANT BATHROOMS

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Well-designed bathrooms that are highly functional and long-lasting needn't be ugly. Laura Rae, an AKW designer, gives the low down on what the key is to a well-designed bathroom in her opinion, and how these trends have been translated into the creation of the AKW Beautiful Bathrooms collection.

**It's all about balancing storage, space and light** - A well-designed bathroom should maximise the amount of space, storage and light available.

**Is the space relatable for the end user?** – One of the most important things is relatability in terms of space. Bathrooms on television and in brochures are often depicted as large spaces with plenty of natural light. This is not the case in many homes. This is what we keep front of mind when creating design concepts.

**Key priorities for the bathroom** – Good design is important to ensure the bathroom is easy to use and access, keeping the user safe and benefitting their well-being.

**Making sure the space feels contemporary** – Cost-effective bathrooms don't have to look 'cheap'. In terms of design, we have gone for a classic yet contemporary aesthetic for the AKW Beautiful Bathrooms collection, ensuring our bathrooms are modern and in keeping with the times, but also won't look dated or unfashionable anytime soon.

**The finishing touches** – Once the bathroom meets the needs of the residents and maximises the space available, we focus on the aesthetics as this is a key factor in promoting positive well-being. We start by creating a mood board that encompasses the theme, bearing in mind the tenants and also current interior design trends. This is all done with a focus on inspiring our customers.

**Bringing experience to bear** – Designing spaces that meet the needs of its users on both a physical and emotional level can be difficult, but we are more than prepared for that challenge because it's what we've done for over thirty-five years, we create products that do more and offer the most crucial element – choice.

# A BATHROOM FOR LIFE

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Upgrading bathrooms to make them more accessible can be both expensive and disruptive. AKW have considered how your tenants' requirements might change over time, and have developed a solution you can use to future-proof your bathrooms.

Creating a new 'AKW Bathroom for Life' involves installing a wet room former during the development or refurbishment works. Alongside the wet room former, a special AKW waste

adaptor is installed beneath the bath, so that if your current or future tenant loses some mobility, a wet floor shower room can quickly be created, as the components are already installed. You simply remove the bath and the bath waste adaptor.

You can also be reassured that by using our Tuff Form wet room formers, the showering / bathing area can support a full bath and bather, up to a 60 stone combined weight.



From  
this



To  
this

In as little as ½ a day once AKW  
Bathroom for Life is installed

## FUTURE-PROOF HOUSING ASSOCIATION BATHROOMS

AKW's 'Bathroom for Life' solution enables a wet room waste and former to be installed when a bathroom is being refurbished or built for the first time.

The area can then be waterproofed using AKW's safety flooring, before a bath is fitted. In the event of tenant needs changing, the bath can be removed and the space quickly transformed into a wet room and back to a bath again if required at a fraction of the cost of a full inclusive bathroom refurbishment.

## MINIMISE TENANT DISRUPTION AND MOULD!

AKW wall panels are up to 6 times faster to fit than tiles and 25% cheaper to install.

When time is of the essence, using wall panels is not only a cost-effective solution, but they save on time too. They are long lasting, require no grouting and are also mould resistant, meaning that they are a valuable addition to any bathroom where being 'low maintenance' is a priority.



As AKW's housing association (HA) manager research showed, having a bathroom that 'looks good' is the top priority for both HAs and tenants alike. With the inclusion of one of AKW's range of wall panels, it is possible to promote the aesthetics of the space, whilst reducing maintenance.

## PROMOTE BATHROOM LONGEVITY

Many AKW Beautiful Bathroom products carry 'made for life' guarantees.



'Fit and forget' and 'long lasting' are both key wishes revealed by the AKW survey of housing association managers and tenants. With 'made for life' warranties on many of the products in the AKW Beautiful Bathrooms collection, peace of mind on this front can be easily achieved.

This 'made for life' warranty covers manufacturing and material defects on all non-electrical items, excluding normal wear and tear, in general domestic applications. By using high quality products such as those in the Beautiful Bathrooms collection, the end result is installations that won't just look good, but will stand the test of time.

# AKW BEAUTIFUL BATHROOMS COLLECTION A STYLE TO SUIT

When the collection was created, AKW's inhouse designer, Laura Rae, created tenant personas from which the bathroom suites were developed.

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## A SAGE HAVEN

“So, this suite for me was aimed at couples and singles aged 45+. It was given a classic yet contemporary feel with crosshead taps, green paint and floral artwork to reflect the slightly older age of the users.”



## MADE YOU BLUSH

“This bathroom was created with young families and couples in mind, who might be planning a family at some point in the near future. It is easy to keep clean when time is of the essence, and slip-resistant safety flooring has been included to avoid any unexpected visits to A&E with the children!”

## A CLEAN SLATE

“This suite has been designed with families who have teenage children in mind. We wanted to bring an inspirational look and feel to the space and some all-important calm for frazzled parents!”



## BLUE BOTANICAL

“This bathroom has been created for the professional couple, or the family with older children who work, but still live at home, so want something more grown up. The design is bolder but still uses all of the standard fixtures that would be found in a traditional housing association bathroom. However the tiles and flooring add some unexpected elements to take the space to the next level.”

# MORE THAN JUST A BATHROOM

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## HELPING YOU GET THE RIGHT BATHROOM EVERY TIME:

- + 35 years expertise in the care sector
- + A network of sales reps offering consultancy and advice
- + AKW's team of nationwide specialist Surveyors are on hand to visit, measure the space, supply drawings, and advise on the best fixtures and fittings for new bathrooms, giving peace of mind and expert assistance with the design or specification of each project

## FROM ORDERING TO INSTALLATION:

Customer Service colleagues that provide assistance and peace of mind. They're here to help with placing orders and arranging contact-free deliveries that suit our customers.

Technical Support team with decades of experience - many have previously worked as plumbers - is available to guide and support customers during and after installation.

## AFTERCARE:

AKW is proud of its aftercare and aftersales support. If contractors and installers need spare parts, they will be delivered next day.

HAs, contractors and tenants want bathrooms that look good, are low maintenance, offer a fit and forget solution, are future-proofed, safe, quick to install, have great aftercare, long warranties and are easy to source.

AKW's Beautiful Bathrooms collection gives you all this and more.

“Americans are always mortified when I tell them this, but in England, it's a tradition to put your plaques and photographs and awards and gold records and stuff in your bathroom. I don't know why.”

Adele, Singer

# SUMMARY

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- Do you have ageing bathroom stock that needs upgrading?
- Do you need bathrooms to last longer than 15 years at a time?
- Do you want to prioritise fit and forget, low maintenance benefits?
- Do you want to future-proof bathrooms as much as possible?

If you answer to any of the above is 'yes', then why not consider an AKW Beautiful Bathroom solution:

- The majority of products have 'made for life' guarantees
- Durability and contemporary styling go hand-in-hand
- The Bathroom for Life option enables the easy transfer from bath to wet room and back again



The best measure of a man's honesty isn't his  
income tax return. It's the zero adjust on his  
bathroom scales.

*Arthur C Clarke.*



If you would like to discuss Beautiful Bathrooms with  
your local AKW representative call **01905 823 274**,  
email **sales@akw-ltd.co.uk** or visit  
**www.akw-ltd.co.uk/brochures-guides/  
beautiful\_bathrooms-by-akw**

In 2018/19, 18% of households contained a tenant with a long-term illness or disability which prevented them from working.

• A fifth (19%) of new lettings were to households with specific disability-related housing needs (such as wheelchair access, mobility aids, or adaptations relating to visual/hearing impairment). [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/861471/Social\\_Housing\\_Lettings\\_in\\_England\\_April\\_2018\\_to\\_March\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/861471/Social_Housing_Lettings_in_England_April_2018_to_March_2019.pdf)

1. AKW Qualitative housing association manager research, carried out March 2021.

2. <https://www.fixflo.com/blog/5-most-common-tenant-repairs>