



Designing Wheelchair Accessible Bathrooms

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produced in conjunction with AKW

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When designed well, a wheelchair accessible bathroom helps to promote dignity and independence, but what exactly constitutes 'good design'?

Although all adapted bathrooms should be tailored to the individual's specific requirements, there are common design elements that should be included when specifying or installing any wheelchair accessible bathroom.



Key Elements of Good Design in Wheelchair Accessible Bathrooms

Good design promotes safe movement

Manoeuvring into, out of, and around the bathroom are key considerations, not only when thinking about the wheelchair user, but any personal care assistants that might accompany them. With this in mind:

- + **Prioritise level access throughout the space** – This can be achieved using a wet room former, or a recessed or ramped shower tray.
- + **Ensure doors are outward facing** – This increases the space within the bathroom and helps in case of emergencies. Be aware, this practice should not be employed when the bathroom door is near the top of the stairs.
- + **Ensure easy and safe level access to the shower** – This can be done by using a corner design for the shower space¹.
- + **Minimise any gradient near the WC** – A level-access shower area has a gradient to help drain water. You should ensure this is not within the WC transfer zone, to minimise wheelchair tipping hazards.
- + **Incorporate a raised-height toilet** – This will allow for easier transfer from wheelchair to WC.
- + **Ensure the WC is accessible from both sides, if possible** – This can be a challenge in some domestic spaces, but is best-practice advice² and facilitates transfers, personal assistant support, and potential changes in need for the wheelchair user.
- + **Ensure there is no external plumbing and pipework** – To promote ease of movement around the space, all of the pipework needs to be boxed in or concealed.
- + **Think about the placement of radiators or towel rails** – These can hinder wheelchair movement and also be a safety hazard. Always opt for low-surface temperature heat sources and consider underfloor heating as an alternative.
- + **Use slip-resistant flooring** – This maximises the traction of the wheelchair and minimises the risk of falls.
- + **Use a wall-hung basin to improve access, consider the type of basin, and its height** – One with handles or a concave design can make use easier for a wheelchair user. The basin height should also be tailored to the user's requirements (although compromises might be needed if the space is also used by the wider family).

Source

1: Habinteg – Wheelchair Housing Design Guide. Available at www.habinteg.org.uk

2: Habinteg – Wheelchair Housing Design Guide. Available at www.habinteg.org.uk

Good design promotes independence

The aim of any accessible bathroom is to promote the dignity of the user. If they are also able to use the space independently, then these are key elements to include:

- + **Think about shower placement** – This will impact movement around the space. For example, fittings can encroach up to 500mm on one side of the space (not both).
- + **Use technology to promote independence** – AKW's remote-controlled SmartCare Plus® electric shower helps the wheelchair user operate the shower with no additional assistance.
- + **Add a handle or rail to the door** – This helps the wheelchair user close the door behind them, without the need for additional assistance.
- + **Think about the user's reach** – Ensure all of the essential fixtures and fittings (such as the toilet flush, light switches and bath/shower controls) are at a height and reach that supports functional use.
- + **Tailor the placement of grab rails to suit their abilities** – Think about rail placement beside the WC, wash basin and level-access shower; depending on the bathroom's layout, fold-up rails may benefit some users and any personal assistants.
- + **Incorporate a bidet seat to promote user independence** – If this is something the wheelchair user would benefit from, remember to include an isolated electrical supply in compliance with Building Regulations.

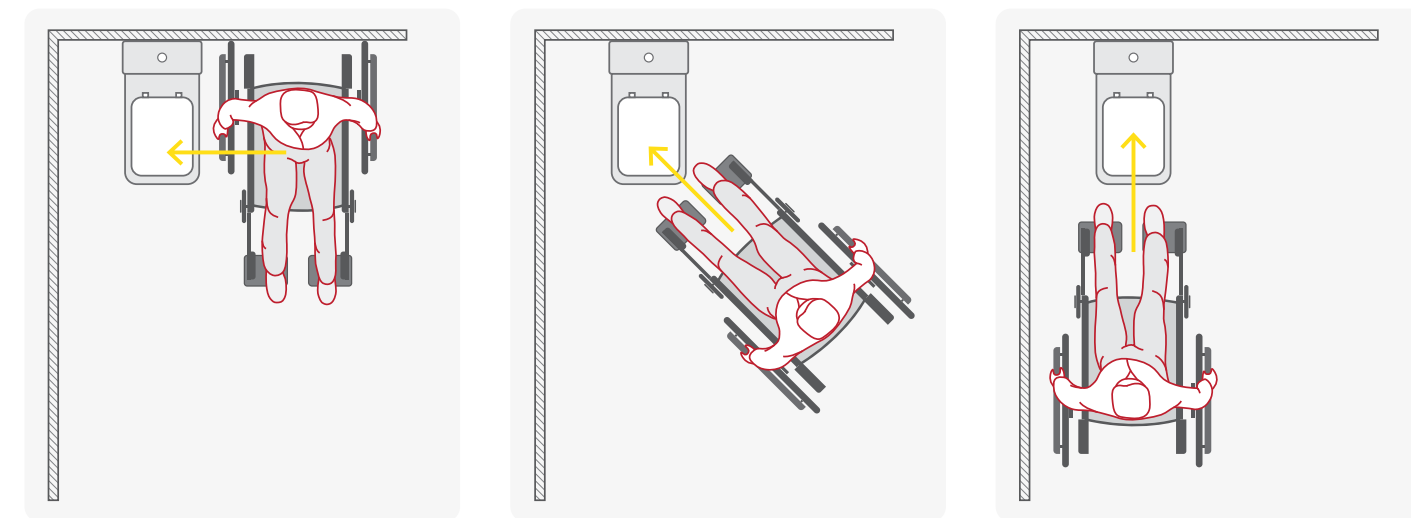
Good design makes life better

There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to wheelchair accessible design, so think about the following:

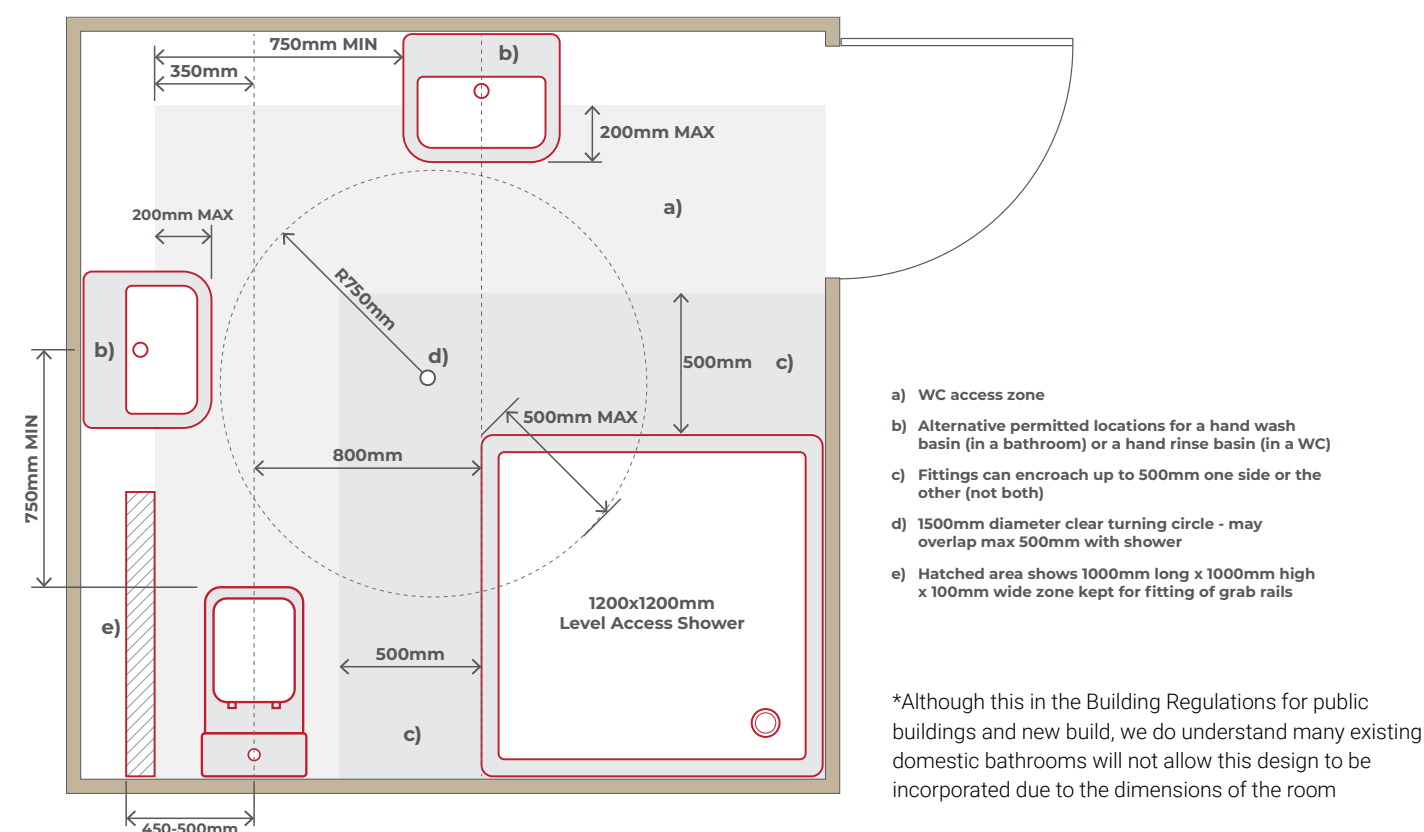
- + **Does the wheelchair user have small children in the house?** For some, removing the bath could impact on their role as a parent. In this case, if there is space, include a level-access shower and a bath.
- + **Does the wheelchair user have a visual impairment or dementia?** Reflection, glare and contrast are all key to the selection of tiles, flooring and fixture colours. For more information on how to design bathrooms for these specific needs, visit www.akw-ltd.co.uk and check out AKW's visual impairment and dementia-friendly bathroom design guides.

Transfers to a WC from a wheelchair

It is important to allow sufficient space to the side, diagonally, and in front of the WC for a range of transfer requirements. Also, commodes or shower chairs may be in use, so the WC needs to project sufficiently out into the space to allow for these to fit over the unit.



According to Building Regulations for England³, new wheelchair accessible bathrooms should comply with a range of manoeuvrability requirements. Here is an example bathroom floor plan that complies to Building Regulations' clear access zones recommendations for wheelchair accessible bathrooms.



Source: 3: Building Regulations for England and Approved Document M, Volume 1: Dwellings, M4(3) Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings. Based on 'Sanitary fittings, associated clear access zones and permitted encroachment of basins – wheelchair accessible' Diagram 3.11, p43.

AKW Products for Wheelchair Users

AKW has developed a wide range of easy-to-use products ideal for wheelchair accessible toilets and bathrooms.

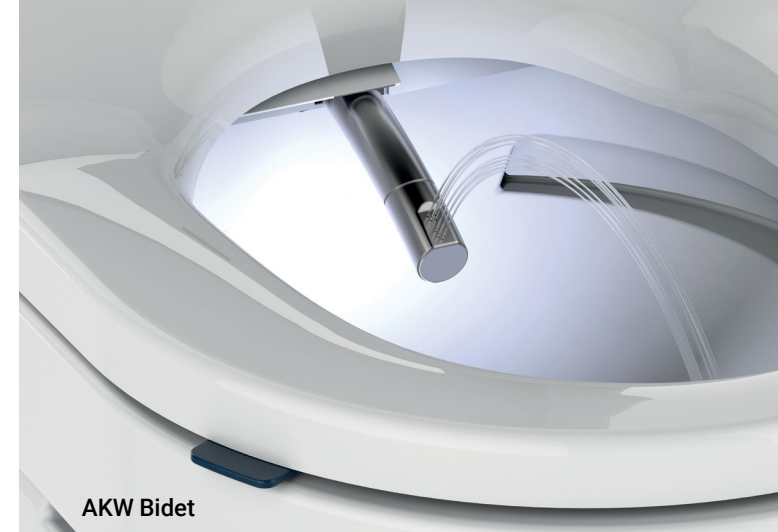
- + **AKW Bidet** – A cost-effective, quick to install, and easy-to-use and maintain bidet for those wanting a non-permanent solution.
- + **AKW Tuff Form and Tuff Form8 wet room formers** – Super strong and cleverly designed wet room formers with a 60st / 400kg weight limit. The Tuff Form8 features an octagonal waste plate, allowing for easy installation every time.
- + **AKW Mullen® Shower Tray** – Ideal for wheelchair accessible showering, and for users with visual impairment. Also available with trimmable ramps to suit any adaptation.
- + **AKW Doc M range** – Designed to comply with Doc M Building Regulations, the range offers contemporary yet functional sanitaryware and a broad collection of support aids and accessories.
- + **Shower seats** – Freestanding, fold-up, and extra-wide shower seats are available to accommodate any accessible bathroom need.
- + **AKW SmartCare Plus® Electric Shower** – Available with a Bluetooth® Smart wireless remote means control is possible from outside the shower area, making it ideal for wheelchair users wanting more versatility and independence when showering.
- + **Grab rails & fold-up supports** – With straight and angled options in a variety of colours and finishes, and able to support up to 23.5st / 150kg, they can be installed throughout the bathroom to promote movement and safety.
- + **Onyx Basin and Ergonomic Concave Basin** – These stylish basins feature concave fronts for improved wheelchair access. The Onyx basin also benefits from hand grips to give users support and stability.
- + **AKW Safety Flooring** – Available in a wide range of dementia-friendly colours, AKW flooring benefits from a high level of slip resistance whether wet or dry, is 100% watertight and durable, making it ideal for accessible bathrooms.

Talk to the experts

Contact us today to book a consultation with a member of our team of sales and surveying experts. They can tailor a solution to your client, building, and budget needs. Request a visit at www.akw-ltd.co.uk/contact-us or contact us using the details below:

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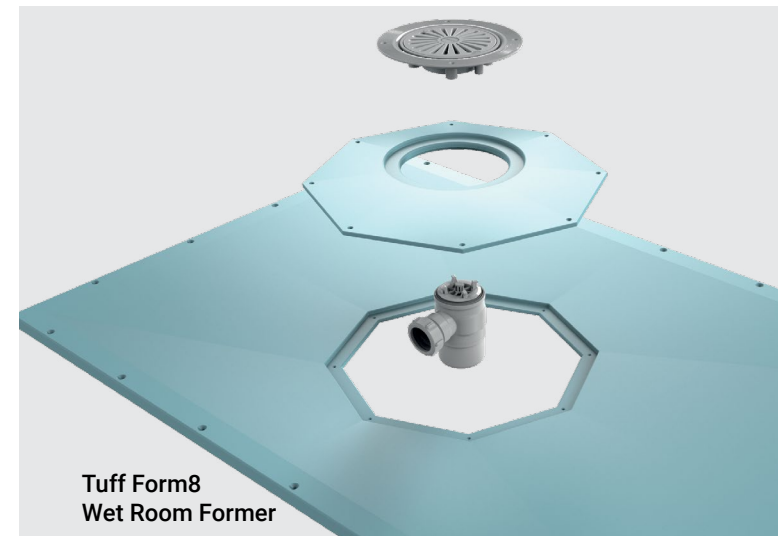
Email: marketing@akw-ltd.co.uk



AKW Bidet



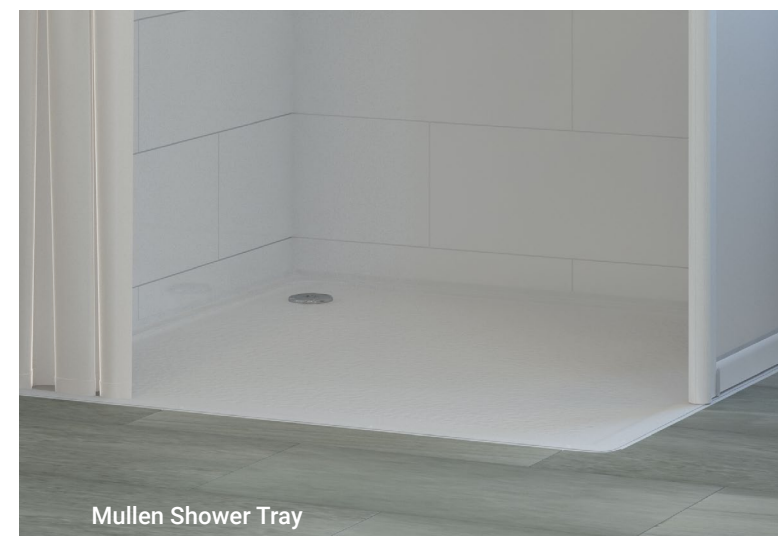
Fold-Up Shower Seat



Tuff Form8
Wet Room Former



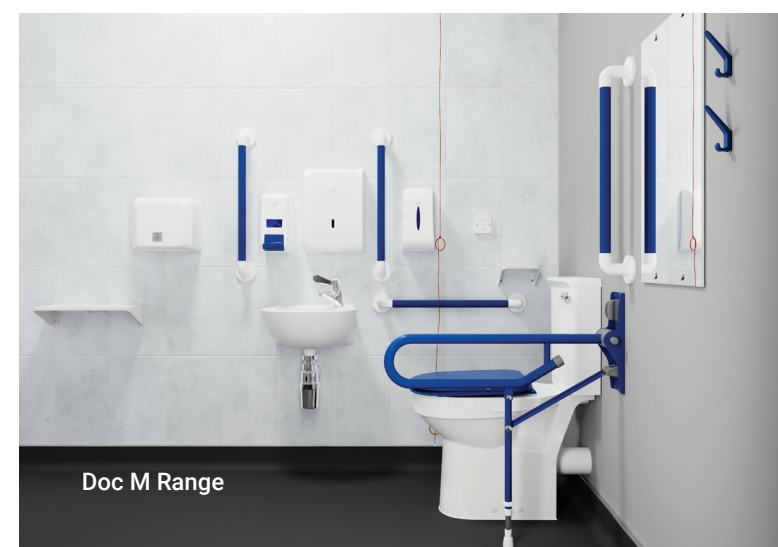
Grab Rails



Mullen Shower Tray



Ergonomic
Concave Basin



Doc M Range



AKW Safety Flooring



Life Made Better

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v1 09/20

