



# Wheelchair Guide for Accessible Bathrooms

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and produced in conjunction with AKW

# Wheelchair Guide for Accessible Bathrooms

Good wheelchair accessible bathroom design helps to promote dignity and independence – but what constitutes ‘good design’? Although any design needs to be tailored to the individual’s specific requirements, there are common elements that should be included when specifying or installing any wheelchair accessible bathroom.



# Key characteristics of good design in wheelchair accessible bathrooms

## Good design promotes safe movement

Manoeuvring into and inside 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 in the bathroom and helps in case of any emergencies
- + **Ensure easy and safe level shower access:** this can be done by using a corner design for the shower space<sup>1</sup>
- + **Minimise any gradient near the WC:** a level access shower area has a gradient to help the water drain. Ensure that this is not part of the WC transfer zone, to minimise wheelchair tipping hazards
- + **Incorporate a raised height toilet:** to allow for easier transfer from wheelchair to toilet seat
- + **Ensure toilet accessibility on both sides if possible:** this can be a challenge in some domestic spaces, but is best-practice advice<sup>2</sup> and facilitates transfers, personal assistant support and potential changes in need for the wheelchair user
- + **Ensure that there is no external plumbing and pipe work:** to promote ease of movement around the space, all of the pipework needs to be concealed within the walls
- + **Think about the placement of radiators or towel rails:** as 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:** to maximise the traction of the wheelchair and minimise falls
- + **Use a wall hung sink 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 sink’s 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](http://www.habinteg.org.uk)

2: Habinteg – Wheelchair Housing Design Guide. Available at [www.habinteg.org.uk](http://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:** as 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:** for example AKW's SmartCare Plus remote controlled shower helps the wheelchair user control everything with no additional assistance
- + **Add a handle or rail to the door:** to help the wheelchair user close the door behind them, without the need for additional assistance
- + **Think about the user's reach:** to ensure that 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 the abilities of the wheelchair user. Think about rail placement beside the WC, washbasin and level access shower. Depending on the bathroom's layout, fold-up rails may benefit some users and any personal assistants
- + **Incorporating a bidet:** to promote user independence. If this is something that the wheelchair user would benefit from, remember to include an isolated electrical supply in compliance with Building Regulations for this.

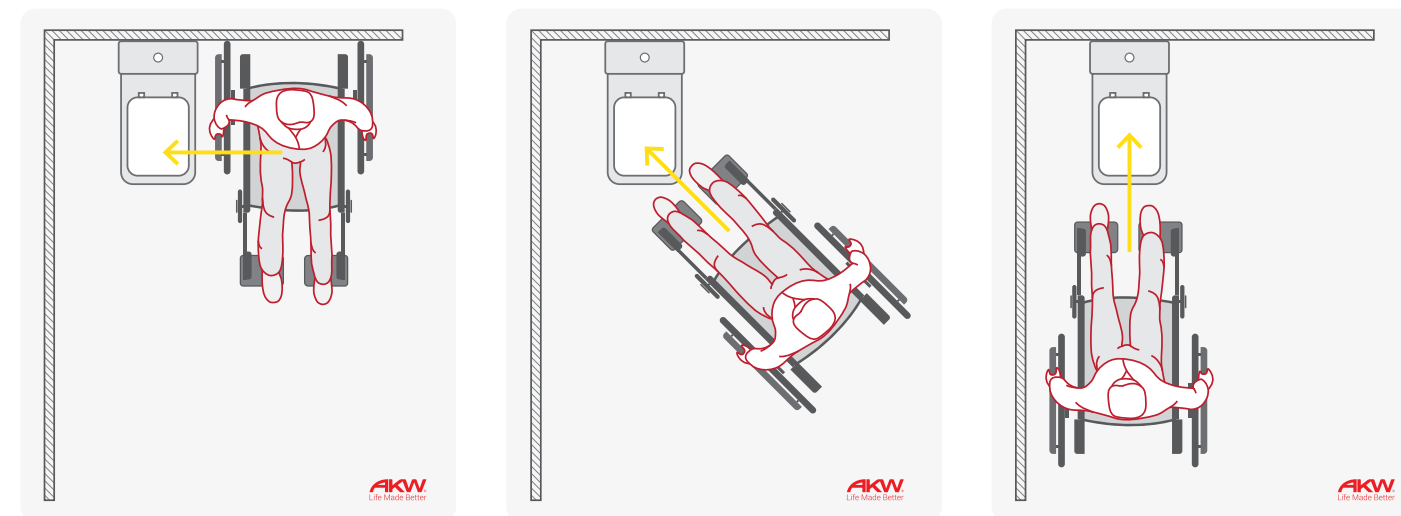
### Good design makes life better

No 'one size fits all' when it comes to accessible wheelchair 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](http://www.akw-ltd.co.uk) and check out AKW's visual impairment and dementia bathroom design guides.

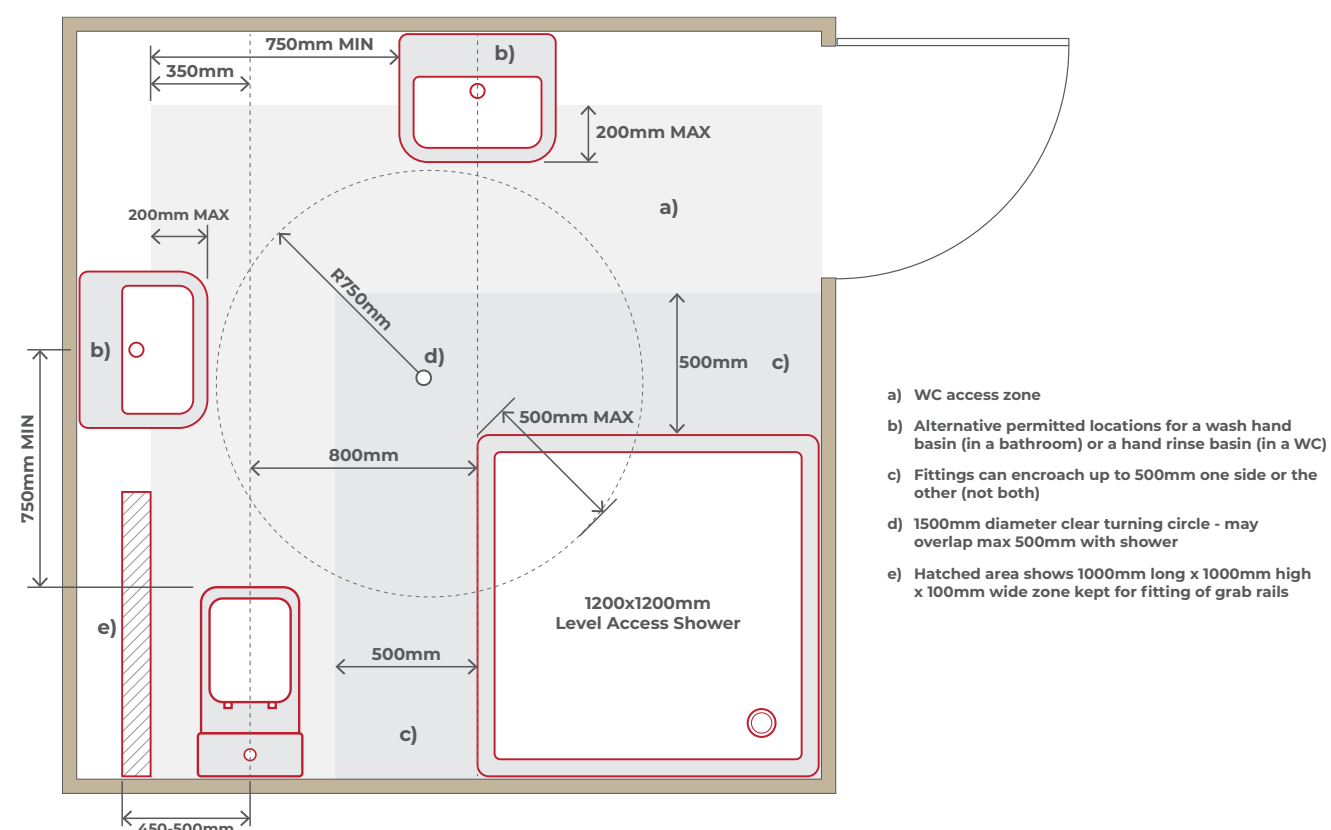
### Transfers to a WC from a wheelchair

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.



### Transfers to a WC from a wheelchair

According to the Building Regulations for England<sup>3</sup> wheelchair accessible bathrooms should comply with a range of manoeuvrability requirements. Here is a sample bathroom layout that complies to the Building Regulations' clear access zones recommendations for wheelchair accessible bathroom.



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

To help care home managers, social and private housing providers and installers, AKW has developed a wide range of products that include everything needed to create wheelchair friendly 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, innovatively designed wet room formers with a 60 stone weight limit. The Tuff Form8 even has an octagonal fitting plate, allowing for easy installation every time
- + **AKW ramped or recessed Mullen shower trays:** ideal for easy wheelchair access showering, the shower tray is also available with trimmable ramps to suit any adaptation
- + **AKW DOC M range:** purpose designed to comply with the latest building regulations relating to special needs, AKW's DOC M range offers quality and choice
- + **AKW Shower Seats:** freestanding, fold-up and extra-wide shower seats are available to accommodate any accessible bathroom need
- + **AKW SmartCare Plus electric shower:** the shower's 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
- + **AKW fold-up rails and wide range of grab rails:** with straight and angled grab rails in a variety of colours and finishes, supporting up to 150kg, AKW's range of grab rails can be installed throughout the bathroom and home to promote movement and safety
- + **AKW Onyx basin and Ergonomic Concave basin:** these basins both feature a concave basin front for easy wheelchair access. The Onyx basin also includes hand grips to give users support and stability
- + **AKW safety flooring:** available in a wide range of colours, the flooring is slip-resistant whether wet or dry, 100% watertight and durable – it is the ideal flooring for accessible bathrooms.

## Talk to the experts

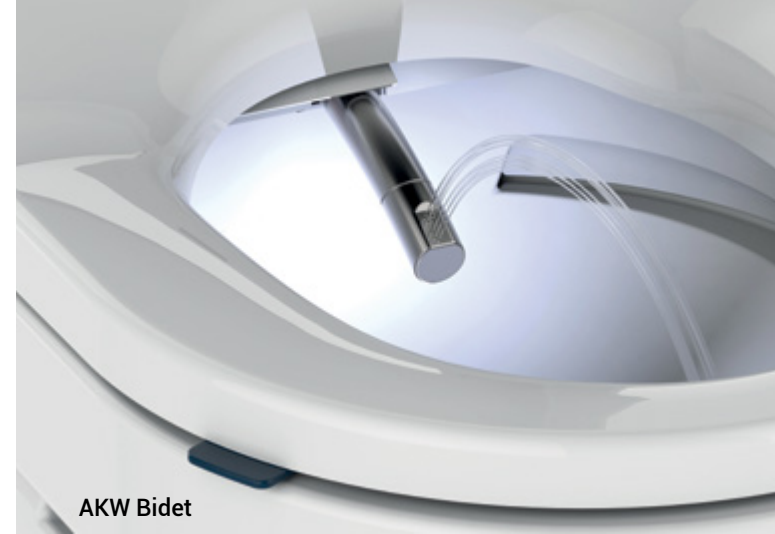
Contact us today to book a consultation with a member of our 60-strong team of sales and surveying experts. They can tailor a solution to your specific resident, building and budget needs. You can request a visit at [www.akw-ltd.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.akw-ltd.co.uk/contact-us) or alternatively contact us using the details below:

**Tel:** 01905 823298

**Email:** [marketing@akw-ltd.co.uk](mailto:marketing@akw-ltd.co.uk)

**Fax:** 01905 823297

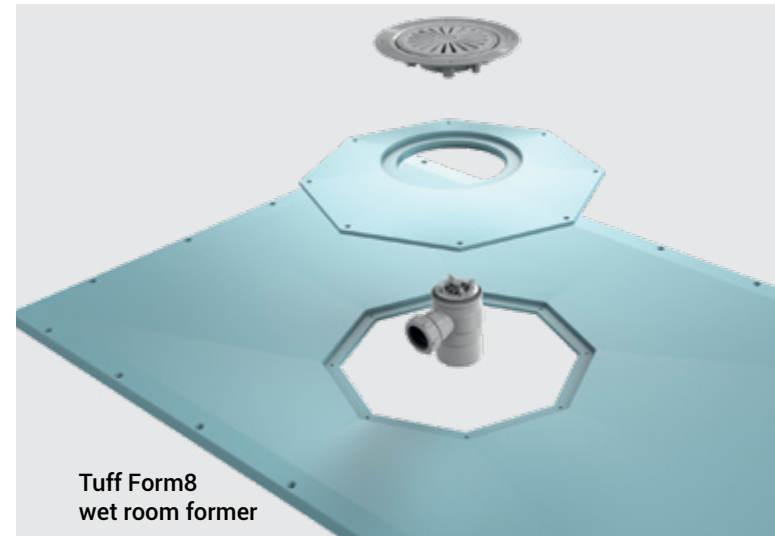
**Address:** AKW, Pointon Way, Hampton Lovett, Droitwich Spa, WR9 0LR



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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