

A guide to level access showers

What is a level access shower and what does it look like?

A level access shower is an area where there are no steps or thresholds to get into the shower. As you can see from the example below there is no visible tray or lip into the shower as it is hidden under the anti-slip flooring.

Shower cubicles are considered to be walk in but often the step into the tray can prevent those with mobility issues from using the shower and chairs if the person is unable to stand for long periods of time. Cubicles can also make it difficult for carers to support and can prevent grab rails being fitted.



Other considerations

- Shower unit – Depending on your needs and preferences, it may be worth considering a shower unit which has pre-set controls or one control which regulates the rate of flow and temperature. Ensure the shower unit can be accessed whether standing or seated (approximately 1000mm from the floor).
- Shower area – If a wheeled shower chair is used or likely to be used in the future consider the size of the tray and ensure if possible it is large enough to accommodate wheeled equipment. Even when standing, a small shower area may result in the user getting caught in the shower curtain.
- Hand basins – If wheeled equipment is used or likely to be used in the future consider the position of the hand basin in the room. This is so it does not limit the movement of any equipment. Also consider the height of the basin if it is used when seated.
- Taps – It may be worth considering changing the sink taps to a lever style if there are any problems with grip and dexterity.
- Anti-slip flooring – In any wet area anti-slip flooring should be used to reduce the risk of slipping and falls.

- Toilet – If it is likely that either a wheeled commode or shower chair is needed then some thought should be given to where the toilet is placed to accommodate this. A guide is to allow a minimum of 450mm from the side wall to the centre of the toilet pan, this is an ideal measurement and may not be possible for all bathrooms. If the toilet has to be moved, ensure the soil pipe is not fitted to the side of the toilet as this may prevent access for equipment that can be wheeled over the toilet. A standard toilet bowl shape should be considered to allow the equipment to fit. If in doubt, consider an Occupational Therapy assessment.
- Shower chair – If you are unable to stand for long periods of time, shower chairs enable more comfortable bathing. Wall mounted drop-down shower seats can fold away however can limit movement and are at a set height. A standalone shower chair can offer a greater degree of flexibility. Equipment may be provided by the Occupational Therapy service following an assessment if appropriate.
- Grab rails – Can be considered in the shower area to help when standing under the shower, the wall structure will have to be considered to enable safe fixing.
- Shower curtain – Full length curtains offer far more room and maneuverability in the shower area and are far easier to use.
- Shower screens – Can limit the use of space in a level access shower and can be difficult to open/close. Half height, folding screens can be considered if carer support is needed to help with showering.
- Colour – Can be used to offer contrast for those who have a visual impairment. An example would be a dark blue grab rail on a white background.
- Long term needs – Installing a level access shower is a major and costly adaptation which should meet your needs now and in the future. We therefore suggest looking at all the above considerations.

More Information

Are you entitled to VAT relief? Find out more at: www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/vat-relief

Please note this leaflet is a guide and not an exhaustive list of recommendations which will depend on your unique circumstances. If you require an Occupational Therapy assessment please contact Lincolnshire County Council's Customer Service Centre on 01522 782155.

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