

Press Article
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Kingkraft provides bathrooms for people with disabilities

The bathroom is probably the most difficult of rooms to design as there are issues of access to the equipment, ergonomic design and above all the safety of less able, vulnerable users in a wet, potentially hazardous environment.

The Document M is a source of information for design and layout considerations. Rather than add to further discussion on this topic which is well covered elsewhere, this article concentrates on the major equipment decisions for bathrooms for both dependent and independent bathing.

If a shower is to be installed, then there are choices between level access or cubicle or other enclosures. If a bath is chosen then there is a choice between conventional baths and more complex baths for profoundly disabled persons.



If the user is a dependent bather then consideration must be given to the installation of a ceiling track hoist system or to ensuring that any equipment chosen is compatible with a mobile floor hoist.

Again depending on the user's needs, a separate changing bench may be required. The most practical solution in a typical bathroom with limited space is the height adjustable folding wall mounted version.

Another important piece of equipment to consider is the toilet. It is thought by many that the automatic wash/dry toilets, which are important for the dignity of less able users, will in time become accepted as the norm for all users.

Finally there is the basin. Wheelchair users could benefit from a basin with variable height and ideally one with a mirror, light and shaver socket. For users with poor hand control, automatic taps and waste are essential.

When presented with an existing room which can be of an unusual shape, the bathroom designer sometimes needs to be more ingenious. There are inevitable compromises to be made but if these compromises result in barriers to easy access and use of the equipment then the logic of the design is flawed.

Also what must never be forgotten is that this is someone's home and their needs and wishes must be carefully considered. There are many anecdotal stories of councils and others going to great lengths to install a bathroom with all the necessary expensive equipment only to find that the user is reluctant and unhappy to use it.

Any design must preserve the user's dignity as the most important consideration.

Water supplies to the bath, shower, basin etc are controlled by thermostatic mixer valves as a means to help to prevent scalding. These must be of an approved type under the TMV scheme. (Consideration must be given to future servicing and maintenance requirements of these items to ensure their continuing correct operation).

Water supplies to any piece of equipment should be of adequate capacity and flow rate. A bath for example will need to fill rapidly and with restrictions produced by the mixer valves and check valves and strainers, some older boilers will be inadequate and must be replaced by the more efficient modern ones.

Advice on the categorization of a bath installation should be sought from the local water authority.

Electrical zoning regulations are another issue to which attention must be paid. These have been subject to revision in recent years and care must be taken for obvious safety reasons that the latest good practice is followed.

Any equipment in contact with the water supply should be Wras approved. Non slip flooring and grab handles positioned as required, are standard requirements.

The foregoing gives food for thought when converting an existing bathroom. The overriding factor to remember is that somewhere, somebody has done it before and there is usually an answer to that difficult design issue. Reputable equipment suppliers are there to help.

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