

Building Regulations

The Building Regulations are not intended to provide the full standard of accessibility that would be needed in a disabled persons home, but rather to make housing more accessible for visitors.

To comply with building regulations you will usually need to provide at least: -

- access from the pavement or car parking space,
- a level threshold at the entrance,
- entrance storey corridors and internal doorways suitable for wheelchair users,
- a stair suitable for use by ambulant disable people at any change of level in the entrance storey,
- a wc in the entrance storey, and
- sockets, outlets and light switches at a convenient height.

Lifetime Homes

Many housing associations are making builders go further than the Building Regulations to incorporate full Lifetime Homes standards to provide for the future needs of occupiers and the community. Additionally, some councils have policies in their local development plans, either specifically requiring new housing to be to Lifetime Homes or making a strong recommendation to that effect. That will almost inevitably become more widespread as councils look to follow the advice in '*Planning and Access for Disabled People – a Good Practice Guide*', published by The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

The Lifetime Homes concept was developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Lifetime Homes Group in 1991. Lifetime Homes have sixteen design features that ensure a new house or flat will meet the needs of most households. This does not mean that every family is surrounded by things that they do not need. Instead, the accent is on adaptability and design features that make the home flexible enough to meet whatever comes along in life: a family member with a broken leg, someone with a longer term serious illness, or parents carrying in heavy shopping and dealing with a pushchair.

The list below sets out the full Lifetime Homes standards. Homes that meet all the standards are entitled to be designated 'Lifetime Homes'. They will also meet Part M of the Building Regulations.

Lifetime Homes standard 1: Where there is car parking adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3300mm width.

- The general provision for a car parking space is 2400mm width. If an additional 900mm width is not provided at the outset, there must be provision (e. g. a grass verge) for enlarging the overall width to 3300mm at a later date.

Lifetime Homes standard 2: The distance from the car parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and should be level or gently sloping.

- It is preferable to have a level approach. However, where the topography prevents this, a maximum gradient of 1: 12 is permissible on an individual slope of less than 5 metres or 1: 15 if it is between 5 and 10m, and 1: 20 where it is more than 10m. * Paths should be a minimum of 900mm width.

Lifetime Homes standard 3: The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping.

- See standard 2 above for the definition of gently sloping.

Lifetime Homes standard 4: All entrances should:

- a) be illuminated relevant parts of 1.3.1.2 E
- b) have level access over the threshold, and
- c) have a covered main entrance.

- The threshold upstand should not exceed 15mm.

Lifetime Homes standard 5a: Communal stairs should provide easy access.

- Minimum dimensions for communal stairs: -
Uniform rise not more than 170mm
Uniform going not less than 250mm
Handrails extend 300mm beyond top and bottom step
Handrail height 900mm from each nosing.

Lifetime Homes standard 5b: where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully wheelchair accessible.

- Minimum dimensions for lifts: -
Clear landing entrances 1500x1500mm
Min. internal dimensions 1100x1400mm
Lift controls between 900 and 1200mm from the floor and 400mm from the lift's internal front wall.

Lifetime Homes standard 6: The width of the doorways and hallways should conform to the following specifications:

- For corridor or passageway width 900mm (when the approach to the doorway is head-on), doorway clear opening width 750mm or wider.
- For corridor or passageway width 1200mm (when the approach to the doorway is not head-on), doorway clear opening width 750mm or wider.
- For corridor or passageway width 1050mm (when the approach to the doorway is not head-on), doorway clear opening width 775mm or wider.
- For corridor or passageway width 900mm (when the approach to the doorway is not head-on), doorway clear opening width 900mm or wider.
- The clear opening width of the front door should be 800mm.
- There should be 300mm to the side of the leading edge of doors on the entrance level.

Lifetime Homes standard 7: There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and living rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchair users elsewhere.

- A turning circle of 1500mm diameter or a 1700x1400mm ellipse is required.

Lifetime Homes standard 8: The living room should be at entrance level.

Lifetime Homes standard 9: In houses of two or more storeys, there should be space on the entrance level that could be used as a convenient bed space.

Lifetime Homes standard 10: There should be:

- a) a wheelchair accessible entrance level WC, with
- b) drainage provision enabling a shower to be fitted in the future.

- The drainage provision for a future shower should be provided in all dwellings.

For dwellings with three or more bedrooms, or on one level, the WC must

be fully accessible. A wheelchair user should be able to close the door from within the closet and achieve side transfer from a wheelchair to at least one side of the WC. There must be at least 1100mm clear space from the front of the WC bowl. The shower provision must be within the closet or adjacent to the closet (the WC could be an integral part of the bathroom in a flat or bungalow).

In small two-bedroom dwellings where the design has failed to achieve this fully accessible WC, the Part M standard WC will meet this standard.

Lifetime Homes standard 11: Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails.

- Wall reinforcements should be located between 300 and 1500mm from the floor.

Lifetime Homes standard 12: The design should incorporate:

a) provision for a future stair lift

b) a suitably identified space for a through-the-floor lift from the ground to the first floor, for example to a bedroom next to a bathroom.

- There must be a minimum of 900mm clear distance between the stair wall (on which the lift would normally be located) and the edge of the opposite handrail/ balustrade. Unobstructed 'landings' are needed at top and bottom of stairs.

Lifetime Homes standard 13: The design should provide for a reasonable route for a potential hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom.

- Most timber trusses today are capable of taking a hoist and tracking. Technological advances in hoist design mean that a straight run is no longer a requirement.

Lifetime Homes standard 14: The bathroom should be designed to incorporate ease of access to the bath, WC and wash basin.

- Although there is not a requirement for a turning circle in bathrooms, sufficient space should be provided so that a wheelchair user could use the bathroom.

Lifetime Homes standard 15: Living room window glazing should begin at 800mm or lower and windows should be easy to open/ operate.

- People should be able to see out of the window whilst seated. Wheelchair users should be able to operate at least one window in each room.

Lifetime Homes standard 16: Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be at a height usable by all (i.e. between 450 and 1200mm from the floor).

- This applies to all rooms including the kitchen and bathroom.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing

In addition to ensuring that all new homes are able to be adapted in the future as described above, many housing associations and planning authorities also require that a small percentage of the dwellings on larger sites should be suitable for wheelchair users as built. To be accessible to wheelchair users, housing needs to meet standards that are more extensive and, in some respects, more onerous than both the Building Regulations and Lifetime Homes Standards. The emphasis is on full provision at the time of construction rather than adaptability.

Further information

You can view, download or print Approved Document M of the Building Regulations:

Web: www.planningportal.gov.uk

Or purchase it from The Stationery Office:

Tel: 0870 600 5522

Web: www.tso.co.uk

The Lifetime Homes standards can be found on the Lifetime Homes website at:

Web: www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

The publication Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes can be purchased from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

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Fax: 01904 620072

Web: www.jrf.org.uk

The Women's Design Service produces Housing for Independence: disabled women informing inclusive design principles and policy:

Women's Design Service

52/54 Featherstone Street

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Tel: 020 7490 5210

Fax: 020 7490 5212

Web: www.wds.org.uk

Detailed design guidance for Wheelchair Accessible Housing is available in the second edition of the 'Wheelchair Housing Design Guide' by Stephen Thorpe, from Habinteg Housing Association Ltd:

Web: www.habinteg.org.uk/pages/whdg.html

This guide is produced by the Access Officers of Brighton & Hove City Council, Eastbourne BC, Hastings BC, Lewes DC, Rother DC and Wealden DC