

Future proof your bathroom with a walk in shower

Helpful tips inside for
designing and installing
your own walk-in shower



What is a walk-in shower?

A walk-in shower is a shower without doors or baths. It has an open entrance and a level floor (it can also be referred to as a level access shower or wet room), making it easy to get in and out. Walk-in showers can include glass panels, and built in seats, but consideration for these need to be based on your mobility and functional capabilities.

Why choose a walk-in shower?

- **Saves space:** Great for small bathrooms, making them feel bigger.
- **Easy to use:** No doors or high steps means less chance of tripping. They are perfect for people with mobility issues.
- **Looks good:** Simple, modern style that suits any bathroom.
- **Easy to clean:** No doors or curtains to clean means less dirt build-up.

Planning your walk-in shower

Size and space recommendations

- **Walk-in shower minimum size:** 90 cm x 90 cm
- **Walk-in shower ideal size:** Choose the largest shower tray that fits comfortably in your bathroom. Think about the type of seating you will use, for example, a shower chair with arms needs more space and consider your movements whilst showering.

Make sure that access to the toilet and wash basin is not through the shower area to keep these areas safe and easy to use. Ensure that the tray has no lip on it so that if needed wheeled equipment can be used. If possible, have a tray under the floor level. If this is not an option within your property/budget, consider a low-level tray with a 'lip' no higher than 2 inches.

- **Wall length:** At least 90 cm; 120 cm or more helps keep water in.
- **Showerhead height:** 200–210 cm
- **Shower entry width:** 70–80 cm
- **Task lighting:** If you have poor eyesight, please consider task lighting or brighter bulbs over the wash basin and toilet.

Shower Equipment and Accessories

- **Grab rails - Support bars that help with balance and stability.**

Useful for assisting to stand when moving from a shower stool or just to provide support when standing. These can also be placed near the toilet to assist transfers on/off the seat. They can be installed in vertical, horizontal, or angled positions and are available in different sizes and colours to suit individual needs.

- **Shower seat or stool**

This may be required if you have poor balance, unable to stand or you are easily fatigued and will provide a safe place to sit while showering. Seating options include wall-mounted fold-down seats, stools or shower chairs with arms to support your transfers. Always check the weight limit before use.

- **Non-slip flooring - Essential for preventing slips and falls in wet areas.**

Choose flooring specifically designed to reduce the risk of slipping such as textured tiles or Altro flooring.

- **Detachable shower head** – Sometimes if you are seated whilst showering a detachable shower head makes it easier to wash all places: e.g. hair, feet.

- **Toilet** – If you currently use equipment on your toilet then consider a raised or “comfort” height toilet (17-19inches / 43-48cm from the ground) for easier sitting and standing, allow at least 450mm from the centre of the toilet to any wall or fixture on either side. This ensures space for mobility aids or equipment if needed later.

If possible, avoid square toilets as any future equipment cannot be used to raise these. Vanity units are fashionable however these can prevent equipment from being fitted to them if needed.

Comfort Height Toilet (Pros and Cons)

Pros	Cons
Less pressure on joints and lower back.	Feet can dangle from the seat, affecting circulation.
More comfortable for taller people.	Uncomfortable for shorter people and children.
Offers the best support for frail older adults and people with disabilities.	Prevents a natural squatting position, so may cause constipation.
	Some equipment may be difficult to use over them if needed in the future.

Standard Height Toilet (Pros and Cons)

Pros	Cons
Allows for natural squatting position.	Difficult to use for frail older adults and people with disabilities.
Good for children.	Difficult to get up from.
Good for those of shorter stature.	Puts more pressure on joints and lower back.

- **Wash basin and taps**

Lever taps are easier to turn on and off, especially for those with limited hand strength or mobility.

- **Shower Curtain vs. Screen**

A shower curtain is usually easier to manage than a glass screen.

Extra-long curtains are available for better coverage.

If carers assist with bathing, shower curtains are the preferred option, but you can also consider using half-height, portable shower screens for easier access, and to prevent water escaping the area.



Special Considerations for Dementia

If someone with dementia will use the shower, consider:

- Coloured toilet seats for visibility
- Light, non-slip floors (avoid dark floors)
- Brighter or sensor lighting
- Flood prevention plugs
- Matte (non-glossy) tiles
- Weight-bearing sinks for support
- Remove raised thresholds to prevent trips
- Keep flush and taps familiar — don't change layout
- Clear signage with pictures on doors
- Colour-contrasting door frames for better orientation
- Remove mirrors or consider a roller blind to cover it
- De-clutter the bathroom
- Lower boiler temperature to avoid burns
- Use dementia-friendly paint and colours - these paints have a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) of over 30, which helps improve visibility and contrast for people living with dementia. For more details, you can check online resources or ask for advice at your local DIY store.

Need help installing a walk-in shower?

You can look for trusted tradespeople on the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Trader Register at:

<http://www.traderregister.org.uk/staffordshire/>

Another option is the commercial website Checkatrade:

www.checkatrade.com

Remember, the council does not formally recommend or guarantee any traders listed on these sites. Always check references and reviews before hiring.