



How to choose your adapted living solutions supplier

For compliance, safety and quality of life

Introduction

With a fall in fertility rates and significant growth in life expectancy, the **average age of Britain's population is rising**. People are living longer thanks to advances in technology and medicine, and for the first time ever **there are more people in the UK aged 60 and above than there are under 18**.



However, this increase in life expectancy doesn't necessarily mean we'll enjoy more years of health. **Although people are living on average five years longer than twenty years ago, only four of those years are spent in good health.**



This suggests that illness and disability are affecting our lives more than they were twenty years ago, meaning that over **two thirds of the population could spend their retirement years in ill health.**

Architects and designers are working harder than ever to design houses that meet the unique challenges of this ageing population. Open plan spaces that feature **larger hallways, ramps, lower placed appliances and added security precautions** are growing in popularity. It's clear that well-designed fixtures and appliances can facilitate independent living for people with reduced mobility, and improve their quality of life.

We've put together this guide to help you choose an adapted solutions supplier who'll provide you with accessible, inclusive-living products that facilitate independence.

The number of people in the UK aged

85+



is predicted to

DOUBLE

in the next 20 years



in the next 30 this will

TREBLE



Requirements of people with mobility needs

The need for fully accessible solutions within care homes is increasing, with a growing number of reasons why people may require adapted living solutions. They may be older and in poor health, using a wheelchair, or suffering from a mental health illness. Although disability affects people of all ages, the prevalence of disability in the UK rises with age, with **78% of disabled people aged 85 or over**.

Dementia is only one form of disability. Whichever disabilities or illnesses people are living with, their environment needs to be designed in such a way that they can navigate it safely, in order to continue to be as independent as possible. With these various stages of disability, adapted inclusive living solutions need to feature subtle differences that can be changed as and when, to suit the needs of the user, no matter their mobility or condition.

This is especially important when designing for care homes – **good quality, inclusive design will avoid the possibility of a future occupant being concerned by the appearance.**

Regardless of their age or health, people with restricted mobility want specialist products that will enable them to retain their independence. However, each individual will have varying levels of need depending on the type or stage of their disability. It's important to partner with an adapted solutions supplier who will not only meet these requirements, but work with you to ensure each product matches each individual.

5 

million
people in the UK

have some form of
restricted mobility
and would benefit from an
accessible home



Key factors to consider when designing for inclusive living are:

✓ Accessibility

✓ Dignity

✓ Independence

✓ Safety

✓ Familiarity

✓ Compliance

The importance of expert experience and advice

We've established that people with reduced mobility have a wide range of different needs and requirements. In order to provide specialist care that meets these specific needs, the adapted solutions supplier you partner with needs to be an expert in their field, with experience across a range of different products and the necessary knowledge of your service-users - including the specific challenges their health conditions are likely to present.

An industry-leading adapted solutions supplier will design products with the end-user in mind. They'll send surveyors to visit each room and take measurements, and they will also measure the height of the individual themselves. So when it comes to providing a solution to a problem, a survey can identify the specific needs of the user in order to establish the best possible solution for them. They will ask questions not only about the user's current needs and what products they would like, but also what they may need in the future. They'll also work closely with industry experts such as occupational therapists and healthcare professionals, to ensure the products receive expert review throughout the entire conception, design and manufacturing process.

The offer of industry leading warranties on all products will demonstrate your suppliers' confidence in the quality, safety and reliability of their products. They should also offer a dedicated after-sales service, so you won't need to worry about support after the products have been installed.

Selecting an experienced partner with the relevant industry knowledge will give you peace-of-mind that they fully understand the needs of your service-users.

18%

of the population have a **health condition** or **disability**

that limits their day-to-day **activities**



Always get a survey done and check the following:

- ✓ Experience
- ✓ Warranty length
- ✓ Product reviews
- ✓ Current and future needs
- ✓ End-user focused solutions
- ✓ After-sales service

Regulatory compliance

When designing for inclusive living, water discharged by outlets should not be hotter than 41°C if accessible by vulnerable people.

Along with accessibility, safety is one of the biggest concerns for people with reduced mobility. The risk of falling increases with age and medical conditions such as strokes, sensory impairment and dementia. People with mobility needs may require increased safety measures in their homes.

For these reasons, regulatory compliance is incredibly important when designing for people with reduced mobility. Your adapted solutions partner should purpose-design all products to comply with the latest building regulations and national standards relating to special needs.

One of the most important areas which requires compliant and safe products is the bathroom. The risk of injury in bathrooms is increased for people with reduced mobility, and **scalding is a serious risk**. Inclusive living suppliers should offer products which regulate water temperature and can be controlled by the user or their carer, to minimise the risk of injury.

By partnering with a supplier whose products are rigorously tested and meet the required safety and performance regulations, you will be free to focus on the implementation of your design, confident that the end-users' experience will be as safe and comfortable as possible.



41°C
MAX TEMP



Innovative solutions

For many older and disabled people, even the simplest of tasks can be challenging, particularly when it comes to mobility within the home. One area that's often cited as causing difficulty in the homes of older people is the bathroom. However, with exciting new developments regarding inclusive design, there's no reason not to be using forward-thinking, innovative products that can really make a difference for people living with mobility needs.

One example of this is the concept '**A bathroom for life**' - a simple solution which allows a conventional family bathroom with a bath to be quickly and easily adapted into a level-access wet room. At a later stage the bath could be quickly refitted to the bathroom without any additional works other than the fitting of the bath and even back to a wet room if the need arose again in the future. **This allows for greater flexibility within care homes and social housing and offers the ability to adapt quickly depending on a resident's circumstances.**

Technology is also playing an exciting role in inclusive design. **Remote controlled devices, built in memory and apps are all being used** to enhance the experiences of people with reduced mobility while still providing an experience to ambulant users. Showers which can be controlled via wireless remote or smartphone app, which feature **LED temperature indicators** are now available. They also remember previous user settings, offering a safe and familiar showering experience every time while also providing aesthetically pleasing design.

Retro-fitting is also becoming more common. Suppliers are able to install products using existing tiling, wiring and pipework as necessary, to ensure a quick, smooth installation process with the least disruption to residents as possible.

Significant investment in technology means quality and innovative products on the market are providing improved experiences for end-users. The adaptive solutions supplier you partner with should be making use of as many of these innovative products as possible.

63%

of people who have got **mobility problems** report having a **bathroom too small** to fit a wheelchair



Ask your supplier about
"bathroom for life" solutions
and remote controls

No compromise on design

In the past, the design of accessible bathrooms and kitchens has often been institutionalised and unappealing. The appearance of clinical looking grab bars and plastic fittings can create a miserable, cold atmosphere for users, and potentially affect their well-being. However, accessibility doesn't have to mean foregoing style and elegance. Whilst safety and functionality should be first and foremost, it's important to deliver products that also match the users' style and taste, so they feel comfortable and happier using them. Industry-leading adapted solutions providers are making design a priority, with increased consideration given to the colours, patterns, shapes and overall appearance of their products.

Design can also be an important factor when putting together a space that will meet the needs of the user. For example, consider a customer who suffers from dementia. Colour and contrast can be used to help people with dementia identify key features in rooms. If they require the use of a grab rail when using a shower, it is necessary to choose one in a contrasting colour to the wall or tiles it's attached to, in order to offer a visible point to grab on to.

Inclusive designed solutions that are both stylish and practical can really make a difference to an individual's day-to-day life. Choose an adapted solutions provider who uses state-of-the-art design programmes and a team of experienced designers to create products that are as stylish and luxurious as they are practical and durable.



87%

of residents say that
their home
impacts their overall
happiness



Conclusion

The built environment can contribute to a more equal, inclusive and cohesive society if the places where we live are designed to be accessible and inclusive.

With older generations living longer and facing progressively ill health, and diseases like dementia affecting levels of mobility for increasingly younger people, **inclusive design is more important than ever**. And, although factors like regulatory compliance and innovation should be taken into account, ultimately the most important consideration when designing for people with reduced mobility is how to provide the best possible experience for them, in order to improve their quality of life.

Providing a good quality of life to service-users within a care home can be as simple as a caring chat, a hearty meal, or attendance at a social event outside the facility. However, introducing inclusive designs can help go above and beyond this level of care by providing them with dignity, increased safety, and a level of familiarity they are comfortable with.

So when you're designing for the complex needs of people with reduced mobility, it's best to partner with an experienced supplier of inclusive living products. As well as providing you with expert guidance and suggestions throughout the design process, you can be confident they'll have a deep understanding of your service-users, and be passionate about delivering the best possible solutions to their problems.



INCLUSIVE DESIGN

is more important
than ever before



To find out more about an experienced inclusive living products supplier who can meet the needs of your service-users, speak to one of our experts on 01905 823 274 or email marketing@akw-ltd.co.uk

Conclusion



1. There are different stages of disability

People with restricted mobility want specialist products that will enable them to retain their independence, and each individual will have varying levels of need depending on the type or stage of their disability.



2. Choose an experienced supplier who is an expert in their field

The adapted solutions supplier you partner with needs to be an expert in their field, with experience across a range of different products and the necessary knowledge of your service-users.



3. Regulatory compliance is key

Your adapted solutions partner should purpose-design all products to comply with the latest building regulations and national standards relating to special needs. Failure to do so could result in injury.



4. Innovative solutions can really make a difference

Significant investment in technology means quality and innovative products on the market, and an improved experience for the end-user. The adaptive solutions supplier you partner with should be making use of as many of these innovative products as possible.



5. Accessibility doesn't have to mean forsaking design

Inclusive living solutions that are both stylish and practical can really make a difference to an individual's day-to-day life. Choose an adapted solutions provider who creates products that are as stylish and luxurious as they are practical and durable.



6. Focus on providing the best possible experience for the end-user

The most important consideration when designing for people with reduced mobility is how to provide the best possible experience for them, in order to improve their quality of life.