

Age-proofing your home

Margaret Edwards

Dad was a master of adaptation –

But even his skills could not overcome some obstacles once he needed a wheelchair.

The front door and step of the bungalow



The bathroom and shower

- Too small for walk – in shower or wet room
- No turning space for wheelchair



Deciding what and how to age-proof your home

Unlike Mum and Dad we were not living with a disability, sensory or cognitive impairment. Plan for possible future need but make the home you want to live in now

1st step – Location, location, location! - does it meet **your** needs? Transport, access to services, walkable area, face to face contact with family/friends.

2nd step – assess your home with a critical eye

- Imagine how it would work if you were less mobile
- Recall problems doing things now or with temporary injury/illness
- Ask a friend with a disability to do a walkabout in your home, observe issues
- Think about parents, grandparents – would your home work for them?

Steps of any size create obstacles:

- carrying items
- using wheels
- impaired mobility (temporary/long term)
- impaired vision, cognitive impairment

Remove obstacles:

- Level thresholds (not temporary ramps that degrade over time and shout 'disabled')
- One level on each floor
- Flat shower trays



Handrails are useful for everyone in places where you can slip or are transitioning

Handrails that are part of the design, built in and in materials that match the surroundings, for example:

- Handrails in showers
- Handrails on both sides of the stairs
- Grab rails next to toilets



Good light is important for everyone for tasks, navigation. Daylight is important for health

- Windows large enough to not need artificial light in daytime
- Light in places to assist navigation and tasks – over stairs/under handrails
- Level access to outdoor space for sunlight
- Light controls in places where you need them – by the bed, top & bottom of stairs, over food preparation areas



Everyone wants to use all the living space they have (and pay for)

Space is easier to use if:

- All doors are wide enough for everyone to get through
- Pocket doors are used where space is an issue
- Where there is more than one floor then a lift is built in or space for a lift is built in OR
- A single straight and wide staircase is built in (for stairlift)





Pace and scale of changes - depends on costs/resources and tolerance of disruption

The priority areas will depend on what your home is like now – key areas usually bathrooms and creating level thresholds

Every time you need something doing you can think age-proofing:

- Replacing windows
- Electrics – sockets, lighting
- Kitchen – access, levels of worktops, circulation space
- Replacing taps, shower controls
- Installing shower to replace bath
- New flooring
- Garden – level access, ramps, lighting



**Door
Handles**



Getting information, advice and competent professionals

Nothing beats word of mouth for builders – see their work, talk to them, are they happy to tailor work to your needs, how do they respond to concept of age-proofing

Which - Trusted Traders – list of contractors by trade and location who have genuine positive reviews

Age UK – local lists of reputable traders

Home Improvement Agencies – geared to people who already have a disability,

Some on - line assessment tools such as ADAPT my home on Foundations website – works if you have a specific disability

The Building Regulations 2010 document M, Access to and use of buildings – Volume 1 Dwellings – useful measurements on space, door width etc. Part M4(3) suitable for wheelchair users.

What people said about our project:

‘You are too young to be thinking about this.’

‘It’s really good that you are planning ahead,
we will need to do something ourselves
--- at some point ---.’

Useful links shared during the session by attendees:

[Freeing up accommodation - a downsizer market - Delivering key outcomes - useful resources - Policies, practice and strategies - SHOP - Strategy - Extra Care - Topics - Resources - Housing LIN](#)

[Older People's Housing Preferences - Resource Library - Resources - Housing LIN](#)

[Technology and assistive devices - RNID](#)