



Buyers Guide

APPROVED DOCUMENT M: ACCESSIBILITY

2021

Ensuring that buildings are fully accessible to all users and occupants is an important consideration. There are many different factors and elements that must be taken into account - including the doors and hardware, windows, bathroom and washroom fixtures and fittings and even the colour of key components. In this guide we provide an overview of the relevant regulations and the products available to make compliance simple.

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OVERVIEW OF THE REGULATIONS

In England, the main source of regulation on accessibility is Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings. The aim of this section of the Building Regulations is to ensure that buildings are accessible to everyone in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which states that physical features of a building, including fixtures, fittings and equipment, must not restrict access to people with disabilities.

While Approved Document M includes guidance on the design of a wide range of elements of the building, this guide focuses on the interior areas, fixtures and fittings.

It is worth noting that accessibility requirements differ across the UK, with the Equality Act applying in England, Scotland and Wales, but not Northern Ireland and each country having separate standards and regulations. These can be found in Part M of the Building Regulations in Wales, Section 3 of Building Standards in Scotland and Technical Booklet R in Northern Ireland.



APPROVED DOCUMENT M IS SPLIT INTO TWO VOLUMES:

VOLUME 1: DWELLINGS

- Applies to new buildings and those undergoing a material alteration, but does not apply to extensions to existing dwellings.
- Contains three categories of requirement:

M4(1) – Visitable dwellings

- Outlines the basic accessibility provisions
- This is the minimum mandatory standard on all dwellings

M4(2) – Accessible and adaptable dwellings

- The accessibility provisions must meet the needs of occupants with differing needs such as older and disabled people
- Must allow adaptation of the dwelling to meet changing needs over time
- The provisions of M4(2) are optional requirement – the dwelling is only required to meet this standard where it is a planning approval stipulation
- The London Plan requires that 90% of all new homes are built to this standard, with the other 10% achieving the higher M4(3) standard

M4(3) – Wheelchair user dwellings

- The dwellings must meet the needs of occupants who use a wheelchair or allow simple adaption to meet these needs
- Also an optional requirement – the dwelling is only required to meet this standard where it is a condition of planning approval

VOLUME 2:

BUILDINGS OTHER THAN DWELLINGS

- Applies to:
 - Newly constructed non-domestic buildings
 - The extension or material alteration of an existing building
 - Where an existing building or part of a building undergoes a change of use
- It has three overarching requirements

M1 – Access to and use of the building

- Reasonable provisions must be made for people to gain access to the building and be able to use it and its facilities

M2 – Access to extensions

- Suitable access must be provided to the extension, where practicable
- Unless suitable access is provided through the existing building

M3 – Sanitary conveniences in extensions to buildings

- If sanitary conveniences are provided in a building that is extended, reasonable provision must be made within the extension for sanitary facilities.
- Unless there is a reasonable provision within the existing building that those using the extension can use



BRITISH STANDARD 8300

BS 8300:2018 provides best practice design guidance for creating accessible and inclusive environments in public buildings as well as residential buildings with shared access – such as student accommodation. Meeting the BS 8300 standard is not a legal requirement but instead provides a framework for ensuring a higher level of inclusivity beyond the Building Regulations. BS 8300 is split into two sections, BS 8300-1 for external areas and BS 8300-2 for interior areas.

WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR DOORS IN NON-DWELLINGS?

As one of the elements of a building most frequently interacted with, the correct specification and installation of doors is essential to ensure a building is fully accessible.

Entrance doors on public buildings should be able to be opened by all, especially wheelchair users and those with reduced strength or dexterity. The regulations state that the door and its hardware must produce an opening force at the leading edge of below 30N between 0° and 30° degrees and below 22.5N between 30° and 60° degrees.

While the regulations state that the entrance doors can be manually operated, many non-powered doors that can resist wind forces will have an opening force that would make it difficult to operate for some.

Powered doors are a simple way to ensure an accessible entrance, with sliding, swinging or folding action doors all acceptable under the regulations. For example, the **DORMA ED100 LE Door Operator** is BS 8300 compliant and allows easy opening and reliable closing. Using built-in sensors, it automatically responds to changes in the surrounding environment, such as air pressure differences or other types of resistance, to ensure reliable opening and closing.

This can be manually activated with a push pad, or automatically by a motion sensor. It is important to note that revolving doors are not considered an accessible option due to the issues they can cause for those with reduced mobility, visual impairments and those with assistance dogs as well as people with children.



For internal doors, the same opening force requirements apply. The regulations also recommend reducing the number of internal doors where possible to increase freedom of movement, especially for those who find opening doors more challenging. Where doors are required for purposes such as fire protection, there are a number of solutions to ensure compliance.

Choosing high quality, variable power door closers will allow the force required to open it to be adjusted on site to suit the door, hardware and location. For example, the **Arrone AR3500 Door Closer** can be fitted to interior and exterior doors up to 1100mm wide or 80kg and meets the BS 8300 standard for accessibility. It is also **CERTIFIRE** approved and has a 120-minute fire rating. When used on a non-fire door it also has the option for a delayed action, which slows the speed of closing, allowing easier movement through the door.

An alternative to this, and one that is recommended in Approved Document M, is to use free-swing or hold-open devices. Electromagnetic door closers with a free swing function, such as the **GEZE TS4000EFS**, allow the door to be opened and closed with minimal force during normal use, but ensures a safe, automatic closing of the door in the event of a fire or power failure.



Hold-open devices will keep the door open until a fire alarm is triggered, at which point the door is released to close under the force of a standard door closer. These can be devices connected directly to the alarm system, or standalone products with their own power source that activate on detection of the fire alarm. Easy to install standalone products, such as the **DORGARD FIRE DOOR HOLDER**, are ideal for retrofit and refurbishment projects.



For more guidance on the specification of door closers, please see our **DOOR CLOSERS BUYERS GUIDE** here. We also have a **DOOR CLOSER CALCULATOR** to help identify which products are suitable.

Furthermore, where doors are fitted with a latch, the opening components, such as the handle must be easy to operate with one hand using a closed fist. For example, the strong and durable **ALTRO 19mm and 22mm RETURN TO DOOR LEVER HANDLES** are BS 8300 compliant and available in a range of finishes. Similarly, the stylish Altro Turn & Release cubicle door latch is also BS 8300 compliant.



WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR DOORS IN DWELLINGS?

For residential properties with a communal entrance, the wheelchair user M4(3) standards stipulate the same opening force requirements of below 30N between 0° and 30° degrees and below 22.5N between 30° and 60° degrees. As with doors on non-dwellings, automatic or power-assisted opening has to be provided if these opening forces cannot be achieved with a manual door. Also, any door entry controls have to be mounted between 900 and 1000 mm above the ground.

All doors and gates leading to the communal entrance have to meet the same standards. (For detailed guidance on clear spaces and the design of the area around the door or gate, please refer to the wheelchair user M4(3) section of Approved Document M.)

It should be noted that the opening force requirements do not apply to private entrances, principally because these are not generally fitted with self-closing devices. However, it does require that the door has an 'accessible threshold'. This is one that is level or, if it is raised, has a total height of less than 15mm and that any upstands higher than 5mm are chamfered.

It is important to consider how this can be achieved while still ensuring the door seals protect against the elements. Wheelchair friendly, Approved Document M compliant threshold seals provide a solution. The **EXITEX LOW HEIGHT MACCLEX ALUMINIUM THRESHOLD** for instance, offers minimal resistance to movement across the threshold due to the collapsing weather seal.



WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR WINDOWS IN NON-DWELLINGS

Volume 2 of Approved Document M provides guidance on the placement of window handles and controls for sleeping accommodations in non-dwellings, such as care homes and student accommodation. All handles or controls of openable windows must be located between 800mm and 1000mm above floor level and must be easy to operate with one hand.



WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR WINDOWS IN DWELLINGS

For dwellings, the M4(2) and M4(3) optional requirements provide similar guidance for the placement of window handles or controls. For accessible and adaptable dwellings - M4(2) – the handle of at least one window in the main living area must be located between 450mm and 1200mm above the floor level unless there is a remote control placed within this range. All other window handles or controls must be between 450mm and 1400mm above the floor.

For wheelchair user dwellings – M4(3), windows should have easily accessible fastenings that are located between 700mm and 1000mm from floor level for at least one window in the principle living area, unless fitted with a remote opening device within this height range. Handles and controls to all other windows must be placed between 450mm and 1200mm above floor level, unless the window is fitted with a remote opening device that is within this height range.

COLOUR CONTRAST REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-DWELLINGS

For those with visual impairments, it is important that key components and surfaces of the building have a strong visual contrast for easy identification. This includes contrast between the door surface and hardware, and between the door frame and wall. Where doors are not self-closing or will be held open, the edge of the door must contrast with the other door surfaces and surroundings.

To ensure clear visual contrast, there are a range of hardware options available in different bold colours. For example, the **HOPPE PARIS RANGE** of coloured hardware provides a low maintenance BS 8300 compliant option. This includes various handle designs and latches in colours such as golden yellow, cobalt blue, rouge red, diamond white, ebony black and anthracite grey.



GUIDANCE FOR SANITARY FACILITIES IN NON-DWELLINGS

For public buildings, including student accommodation, the regulations provide standards and design guidance for accessible toilet, shower and other sanitary facilities.

Suitable toilet accommodation can be either specially designed cubicles in separate-sex toilet washrooms, or a self-contained unisex toilet. The general requirements for all sanitary facilities include a number of provisions that aim to ensure they are easy to use. Cubicle and self-contained unit doors should include light action privacy bolts that can be operated by those with limited dexterity. For example, the large surface area of the **UNION DISABLED TOILET HANDLE** makes it easy to operate for any user and can be reversed to suit left or right handed doors. Similarly, washbasin taps should be automatic, or capable of being operated with a closed fist – for example a lever-action type.



The doors and ironmongery should comply with the general guidance given above, in terms of colour contrast and opening forces. Also, wheelchair accessible facilities should include an emergency assistance alarm. For example, the BS 8300 compliant **SECUREFAST DISABLED PERSONS TOILET ALARM**, which features an integrated power supply for easy installation. It also features high visibility LED indicators and high output audible sounders to ensure assistance is received quickly when needed.

Similarly, for shower facilities, drop down rails mounted on the side walls of the shower area, as well as vertical and horizontal fixed rails, must be provided. The shower must also have a slip resistant, non-spring loaded tip up seat. In all cases, the grab rails should contrast with the surrounding wall to ensure easy identification for those with visual impairments.

To make compliance with these requirements simple, there are 'Document M packs' available that include all the components required. For example, for toilet facilities there is the **NYMAS NYMAPRO CLOSE COUPLED DOC M PACK**, which includes five 600mm grab rails and one 800mm lift & lock hinged support rail required. Also supplied in the pack is a compliant close-coupled WC assembly with toilet seat and spatula cistern lever as well as a suitable basin, fittings and mixer tap.

Alternatively, the Nymas Close Coupled Doc M Pack is ideal for refurbishment projects and includes the five wall mounted and one drop down grab rail required. For shower facilities, the **NYMAS NYMAPRO DOC M SHOWER PACK** contains a thermostatically controlled shower, all the required rails, shower seat and curtains.



SANITARY FACILITIES IN DWELLINGS

While Approved Document M Volume 1 for dwellings does not require the installation of rails in bathrooms, M4(3) does include stipulations to ensure fitting is possible. For example, all wall, ducts and boxings in the bathroom or shower room must be strong enough to support adaptations such as grab rails and seats. The design guidance also includes a 1000mm square area next to the toilet that should be kept free for the fitting of grab rails. There are a wide range of options available in different finishes to suit various design schemes, including durable, corrosion resistant stainless steel – ideal for wet environments.

HANDRAILS IN ALL BUILDINGS

On any stairs or stepped access areas, handrails must be provided. Approved Document M, alongside Approved Document K, provides specific guidance on the height and positioning of the handrails in a given situation. However, in general these must be grippable, of an appropriate profile shape and diameter, and with sufficient clearance to adjacent surfaces.

Therefore, it is important to select products that comply with these requirements. As an example, the **HAMPSTEAD EQUALITY ACT HANDRAIL BRACKET** is BS 8300 compliant and the durable stainless-steel design provides a 90mm projection. Alternatively, the FibreRail handrail system offers a wall mounted or freestanding modular solution that makes creating the required handrail assembly easy.



Specifying the correct products for new build or retrofit projects can help ensure compliance with accessibility requirements. At IronmongeryDirect, we have a number of product solutions available that meet BS 8300 and Approved Document M requirements. To find out more about our range, visit www.IronmongeryDirect.co.uk

ABOUT

We are the UK's largest supplier of specialist ironmongery, and have been supplying to the trade for over 50 years.

Starting out as a traditional hardware shop, we have since expanded to now providing over 18,000 quality products in stock, ready for next day delivery, as standard. Customers can order via our website, call centre and trade counter in Basildon, Essex.

Since 2013 we have been part of the Manutan Group, a leader in the supply of industrial, commercial and office equipment to business. We are a group of 25 subsidiaries across 18 countries who work closely together to be able to offer the highest quality products at low prices.

For the second year running we've been recognised as one of the UK's Best Workplaces™ by Great Place to Work®.

The Best Workplaces™ Award celebrates the companies that promote a healthy workplace culture through a combination of factors including employee trust, pride and camaraderie. To be recognised as one of the UK's Best Workplaces is a huge achievement and is testament to our dedication to create a healthy workplace culture where our employees feel trusted, valued and loyal to achieving organisational goals.

We are committed to driving our business performance through our biggest asset: our people, and we believe that the value and pride our employees place on working at IronmongeryDirect will ultimately be reflected in the customer experience.



“We place our customers at the heart of everything we do. That’s why we constantly review every part of our business, to ensure you have the products you need, when you need them.”



Dominick Sandford,
Managing Director