

Thousands of New Homes Still Inaccessible — Campaigners Demand Urgent Action

Over 300,000 new UK homes built without essential accessibility features, prompting urgent calls for government intervention to protect vulnerable residents.

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Sam Davies, Director at Age Care Bathrooms

strong government promises, hundreds of thousands of new homes across the UK are still being built without the basic accessibility features needed for safe, independent living, significantly disadvantaging older people, disabled individuals, and families nationwide.

In 2022, the UK government pledged to introduce the [M4\(2\) standard](#) as the national minimum for all new homes. The M4(2) standard ensures essential features like step-free access, wider doorways, corridors, and adaptable layouts designed to accommodate changing mobility

needs over time. However, severe delays in implementing this standard have already led to over 300,000 new homes being constructed to the lower M4(1) standard, with approximately 13,000 additional homes added each month.

Under existing regulations, M4(1)—also known as Category 1—homes are only required to be “visitable.” This minimal requirement means a person can enter the property and access a ground-floor toilet, but these homes are fundamentally unsuitable for full-time living by those with mobility challenges. In stark contrast, M4(2)—or Category 2—homes mandate comprehensive accessibility, ensuring step-free entry, spacious hallways, doors wide enough for wheelchair use, and layouts flexible enough to adapt seamlessly as residents age or their mobility needs evolve.

The current housing crisis was recently highlighted by [Inside Housing](#), which quoted Lord Richard Best, co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People. Lord Best described the ongoing situation as “a story of delay and procrastination,” cautioning that each month without meaningful action creates decades of future inaccessibility issues. He emphasised that government inaction effectively “locks in” unsuitable housing stock, exacerbating the housing crisis for vulnerable populations.

Similarly, Architects' Journal underscored widespread professional support for adopting the M4(2) standard across the industry. The journal argued that universally accessible homes are not exclusively beneficial to disabled individuals but enhance quality of life for everyone—families with young children, visitors managing prams, or anyone experiencing temporary mobility limitations due to injury or illness. Architect Amy Francis-Smith specifically criticised the lack of progress and called for urgent action to eliminate the "postcode lottery" of varying accessibility standards that persist across the UK.

"Accessible design isn't a luxury; it's essential," stressed Sam Davies, Director at [Age Care Bathrooms](#). Davies highlighted the urgent need for proactive housing solutions that genuinely support lifelong residency. "We must build homes capable of adapting to people's changing needs, not homes that force residents into expensive modifications or, worse, premature moves into residential care."

Financial considerations further underline the practicality of implementing M4(2). According to recent analyses, achieving M4(2) compliance typically adds just £1,400 per home in construction costs—a minor expense compared to the substantial financial burden of later adaptations or residential care costs, which frequently surpass £60,000 annually per individual.

The ongoing failure to universally adopt M4(2) also has considerable social implications. Accessible housing empowers independence, boosts mental well-being, reduces health risks associated with inappropriate housing, and significantly lowers long-term health and social care expenditures borne by taxpayers.

A public petition recently launched by campaigners now calls on the UK government to immediately mandate the M4(2) standard as the national minimum for all new housing developments, allowing exceptions only in limited, clearly justified circumstances. Advocates argue that the standardisation of accessibility features will create a fairer, more inclusive housing market, simultaneously alleviating pressure on healthcare and social services.

The campaign has garnered widespread support from disability charities, architects, healthcare professionals, and advocacy groups, all urging rapid governmental action. Proponents insist that accessibility should no longer be an optional consideration but a mandatory requirement integral to modern homebuilding practices.

"We have an opportunity to build homes for the future that work for everyone," said Davies. "The continued delay in implementing these vital standards is simply unacceptable. Immediate action is required to protect the dignity, independence, and well-being of countless families across the country."

Campaigners and supporters are encouraging individuals and organisations alike to sign the petition, pressing for urgent policy change that prioritises accessibility, inclusivity, and forward-thinking housing standards. With decisive government intervention, accessible homes can

become the norm rather than the exception, shaping a more inclusive, equitable future for all.

Supporters can sign here: <https://www.change.org/p/mandate-accessible-housing-now-make-m4-2-the-minimum-standard-for-all-new-homes>

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