

50plus Handyman



Creating a cloakroom and shower

50plus Handyman director Roger Runswick discusses creating an additional cloakroom and shower.

A recent customer of 50plus Handyman (let's call her Mrs B) had a problem. A partner was coming out of hospital and whilst recuperating needed to live 'downstairs'. In the first instance a downstairs cloakroom was required. And later a shower. But was this feasible?

The first question was one of space. For a cloakroom an enclosed area is needed. Often under the stairs is the answer and in Mrs B's case there was space available in what was a large cupboard. So far so good!

The major issue with cloakrooms is the drainage and water supply. Water is usually the easier to solve as cold water for a basin and toilet only requires a single 15mm pipe. Hot water can similarly be piped in or an electric hand wash added. In Mrs B's home water was available in the nearby kitchen so another tick in the box!

Drainage is usually another matter. Most people think in terms of a 110mm (4 inch) soil pipe for the toilet. If it's feasible to get one in and connect to the main sewerage then this remains the best solution. However all is not lost if this isn't possible or is too costly or disruptive. For Mrs B the answer lay in a macerator. (If you're having breakfast at the moment skip the next bit.) Put simply, a macerator mashes up what comes out of the loo before pumping it out. The benefit is a small (32mm) diameter pipe can be used in place of the usual soil pipe. Coupled with the fact that a macerator can also pump vertically and/or horizontally for quite some distance it allows a loo and adjacent basin to be fitted into an area where a conventional waste system couldn't function. A macerator is electrically powered and operates automatically. It locates immediately behind the toilet pan and under the cistern so is unobtrusive. For Mrs B the problem was solved.

Modern techniques have also provided a ready solution to the shower problem. Building a shower using conventional techniques means walls and tiling. Now a number of companies manufacture 'all in one' shower cubicles that can be fitted into a bedroom or similar space, proving a small diameter waste pipe can be connected and a cold water supply laid on. Connect up the waste, fit an electric shower and one has a readily available conveniently located shower without major construction works. Such showers also have the added benefit that a leak is a lot less likely to develop.

A few points to note. Fitting an electric shower means making sure that the properties electrical system can accept the relatively heavy current connection required. In many cases this means bringing the earthing up to date. If the shower is going in a room be it a bedroom (or any other room other than a bathroom) then a modern consumer unit is going to be needed as the power sockets in the room will need to be run via a safety device called an RCD. Most modern properties will already have one.

Roger Runswick is a director of 50plus Handyman and a member of the Institute of Electrical Engineers. He can be contacted at roger.runswick@the50plus.co.uk.