

HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT FAMILY-FRIENDLY BATHROOM

Designing a bathroom to suit every member of the household may seem like a challenge, but with careful consideration and practical planning you can create a space to benefit everyone for years to come

Words: Yvette Murrell



Brighten up bathtime with an accent of colour on the walls. Crown's bathroom emulsion, shown here in Feeling Fresh, is priced from £15 per litre.



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↑ If space allows, create separate zones so they can be used at the same time. VitrA's Nest collection has been designed with families in mind, with curved edges, wall-hung units, and storage accessories. Priced £65 for a toothbrush holder to £619 for a 100cm basin unit with doors.

↓ The Clifton shower system from the Laura Ashley bathroom collection, costs around £625, is thermostatically controlled, with a height-adjustable rail and handheld shower, made from brass with a chrome finish, and can operate on a minimum water pressure of 0.5bar.



Families come in all shapes and sizes, so the same should be said for the bathrooms they need too. Whether you're running after lots of little ones, your kids have flown the nest and you want to future-proof your forever home, or you live in a multi-generational household, a few key elements will always be paramount when planning a family bathroom.

Plan a practical layout

Before you begin shopping for new furniture or fittings, think carefully about how your bathroom is used in its current state and what you wish you had more (or less) of. Do you want a bigger bath, better lighting, or perhaps a clutter-free space, so more storage? Once you have your wishlist together, you can start to look at where it can all go. "My golden rule for planning any bathroom is to avoid 45° angles," advises Jude Tugman from Architect Your Home. "Corner basins, WCs, and baths may seem like good space-saving ideas on paper, but they never give a pleasing result. Instead, plan your bathroom layout in a series of rectangular planes." Keep in mind how you and your family use the bathroom on a day-to-day basis. If you have young children, do you need to place the toilet close to the tub for a seat during bath times? Do you need towels stacked in a convenient location when you step out of the shower? If the layout starts to feel cramped, look for lines you can lengthen to maximise the sense of space. For example, installing a vanity top across a whole wall, or taking a shower screen all the way up to the ceiling rather than stopping a foot shorter, can make all the difference to the space.

Put safety first

The shower area is the main point of concern when it comes to safety in the bathroom, but there are a few measures you can take to ensure everyone – no matter their age – is protected. "Thermostatic controls on showers and bath fillers are an obvious starting point," says Helen Shaw of Roper Rhodes. "These systems feed hot and cold water into a mixed valve, maintaining a constant temperature and preventing bursts of freezing cold or boiling hot water. They safeguard against scalding, which is important for everyone."

As for getting in and out of the shower, a wetroom set up is often the most practical option, offering a level floor threshold between the shower area and the rest of the suite. "Not only a great look, the advancements in the products used to create wetrooms these days mean the installation process is not as difficult as you may think," Helen adds. It is also wise to opt for a low-profile bath to make getting in and out easier. Karen Barcoo from Catalano recommends going for rounded edges wherever possible. "They look good, but they are safer than sharp-edged ceramics too," she says.

To avoid slips or trips in the bathroom, Jo Oliver, director of Stone & Ceramic Warehouse, suggests doing your research before you buy. "Fortunately, tiling manufacturers are required to take standard tests which measure the level of slip resistance each product offers – but you should always check with an expert before you buy," she explains. "It is also worth noting that while most slip-resistant tiles tend to have a very rough surface with grooves and indentations, these also create crevices for dirt and substances to collect. Over time, a build-up of this dirt can actually make the surface more slippery – so it is very important to ensure regular cleaning takes place, to maintain the slip resistant properties. In some instances, a tile with lower slip resistance – which is easier to keep clean – could end up being a better solution. The key is to seek advice in store." ▶

→ If you don't have space for a separate bath and shower, go for a shower-bath. With an ample 250-litre capacity, Water Baths of Ashbourne's Flow 1660m-long, shower-bath doesn't compromise on size. Priced £1395.

↘ Store cosmetics and medicines safely out of children's reach. Roper Rhodes's Compose mirror cabinet has adjustable glass shelving and an illuminated surround which can act as a night light if you get up during the night. It also includes Bluetooth technology, so you can play music while getting ready. Priced around £815.

Find out what works for you

"Space for toiletries, good lighting, and an ample supply of hot water all come in high on the bathroom wishlist for families," says Margaret Talbot at Vitra. "But there is nothing nicer or more appealing to mums and dads after a long day than an indulgent soak in a super-size bath." A large bath will not only be practical for bathing little ones, but can also be transformed into a spa-like space when you need time to relax. Before buying a large bath or power shower, Margaret recommends checking your water pressure is up to the job. "A shower that is a dribble rather than a deluge, or a bath that takes forever to fill, is not ideal. If you have stored water rather than a combi-boiler, make sure there is enough to cope with peak times, depending on your daily routine and how many people will be using the bathroom."

Similarly, double basins not only give a luxury aesthetic, but can help make the morning rush easier.

Think ahead

If you're investing in a new bathroom, chances are you won't want to do so again for a while. So it is important to take into account how your family's needs may change over time. "One option to consider when future-proofing your bathroom is to think about how you can introduce smart home technology," advises Faye Froy of Burlington Bathrooms. "Digital temperature control, programmable shower durations, and personalised bath filling settings can all help make the bathroom a more functional area," adds Roland Boal at Mira Showers. "Many of these controls can already be adjusted via free apps on your smartphone, including shower and bath fill limits and maximum temperature settings for added safety."

Rebecca Hitchman, principle showroom designer at CP Hart, recommends bearing in mind your wall structures and their quality. "If at a later date you want to install some grab bars, or a wall-mounted seat, they will only be as strong as the structure they are fixed to," she adds. You can introduce many products into your home to help multigenerational families. Look out for wide vanity units you can slide a seat or wheelchair underneath, height-adjustable WCs, and even more advanced products such as shower toilets, which have a range of washing functions and height-adjustable seats the whole family could benefit from. ➤



→ Avoid having roller blinds or curtains in the bathroom which could get pulled. Opt for shutters or window film instead. The Rainbow film in Blue 517 costs £30, from The Window Film Company.

→ The Mira Mode shower system can be controlled via Mira Showers's handy app, which allows multiple users to personalise their shower preferences directly from their phones. Expect to pay around £515 for a complete system.

↖ Two basins are better than one when it comes to the morning rush in the bathroom. Catalano's sit-on Green 48 basins are each priced from around £342.

↓ A towel rail should be considered a necessity in a busy bathroom. The Aestus Duo towel warmer has plenty of space to hang towels, plus a useful foldout shelf. Available in white or chrome, from £228.



TURN OVER TO SEE REAL BATHROOMS DESIGNED WITH FAMILY LIFE IN MIND

Real project: "Changing the layout improved access."



↑ One wall in this bathroom was framed out to hide pipework, which also allowed for the creation of recessed shelving to house bottles of soaps and shampoos.

Designer Chris Payne worked with a muted colour palette to suit everyone who uses the bathroom.



Designer: Chris Payne, Ripples Bathrooms.

The clients: A professional couple with two teenage children.

Location: Bristol.

The brief: To create a bathroom that could primarily be used by the couple's teenage children, but could ultimately become a guest bathroom when they move out. They wanted a modern look to compliment the renovations they were making in the rest of the house, but a design that still paid homage to the Victorian property's architecture.

Cost: A similar bathroom would cost around £14,500.



Located on the first floor of a Victorian house, this bathroom was long and thin with a tired beige carpet and large sash windows. The walls were old and uneven, and the fittings dotted around the room without any thought of function - a good example of a bathroom having been fitted, not designed. We changed the layout considerably, placing a walk-in shower opposite the bath to create a spacious shower area with improved access. White tiles lighten the room, while the patterned design in the back of the shower and the porcelain timber-effect floor tiles add a more interesting finish. The wall to the left was framed out for drainage and controls for the basin and shower, which also created recessed storage for soaps and shampoo. ▶



A towel rail was installed in a handy location above the bath.

Real project: "We planned space for multiple users."



Designer: Hayley Robson, Day True.
The clients: Grandparents whose children and grandchildren regularly come to visit.
Location: Oxford.

The brief: This two-bedroom two-bathroom family home was once a nunnery, but the homeowners wanted to have a trendy, modern bathroom space reflecting their personal style.

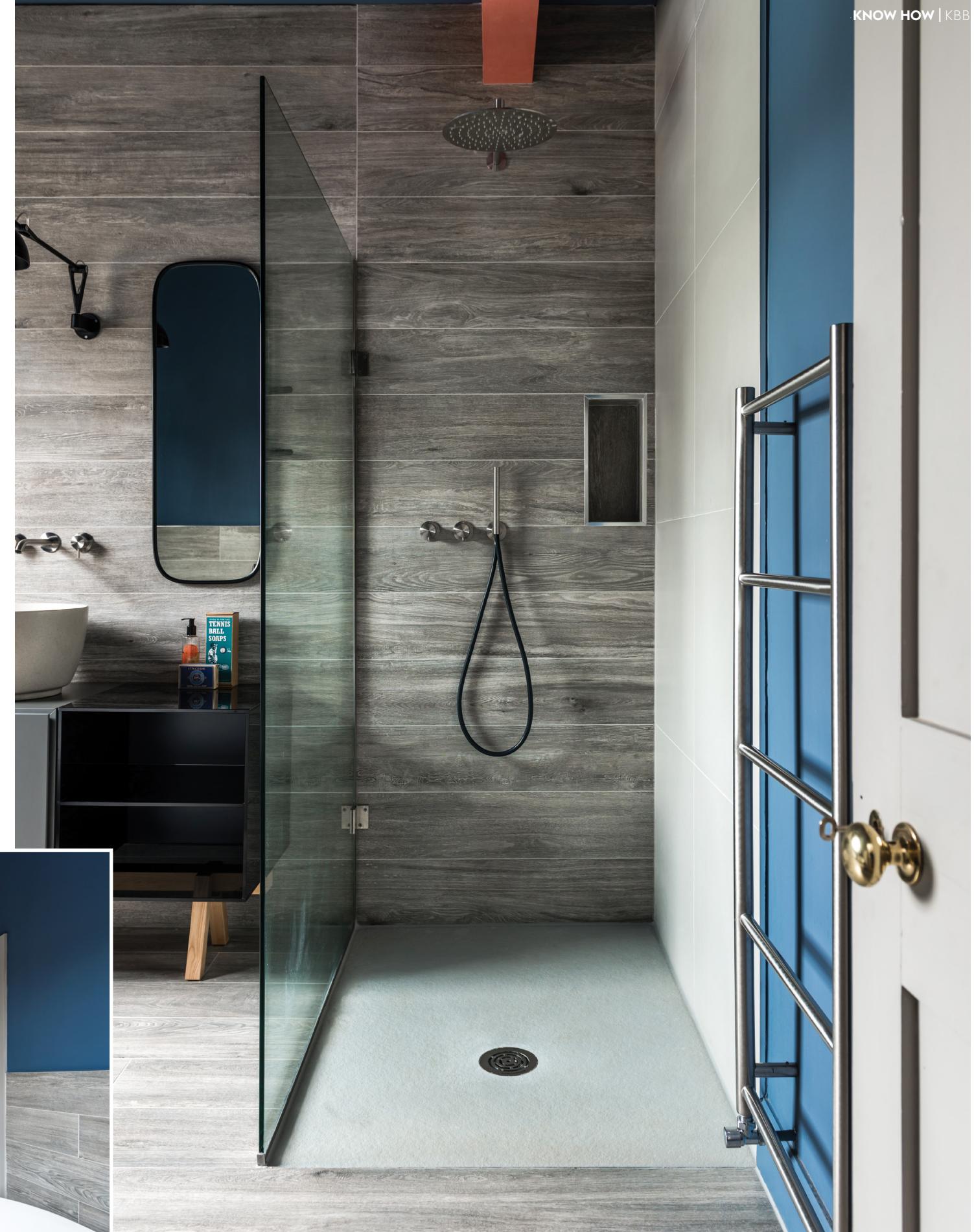
Cost: Around £15,000.

With this project, we had an obstructive metal beam running through the length of the bathroom. So the first decision was how to incorporate this into the design. Textures and colours play a crucial role in revitalising the room, but we still wanted it to feel cosy. The shower's shape is longer and thinner than usual, but we planned it so there was enough room for multiple users - great when the grandchildren are over - and chose a clear shower screen to make the room appear larger. Underfloor heating not only creates lovely warmth underfoot, but helps the floor to dry quicker, preventing it getting slippery. In terms of storage, we purposely chose large drawers which are as practical as they are stylish - made from different materials to create a contrasting, contemporary look. ▶



↑ A combination of contemporary shapes, on-trend colours, and tactile textures have helped transform this family bathroom into a stylish sanctuary.

→ Rather than covering up the large metal beam in the room, designer Hayley Robson made it a statement feature by painting it in a bright coral.



↑ A walk-in shower is more accessible for the young children when they visit, and will stand the test of time and improve access for the owners as they get older.

Real project: "Safety and access were key."

Designer: Louise Ashdown, West One Bathrooms.

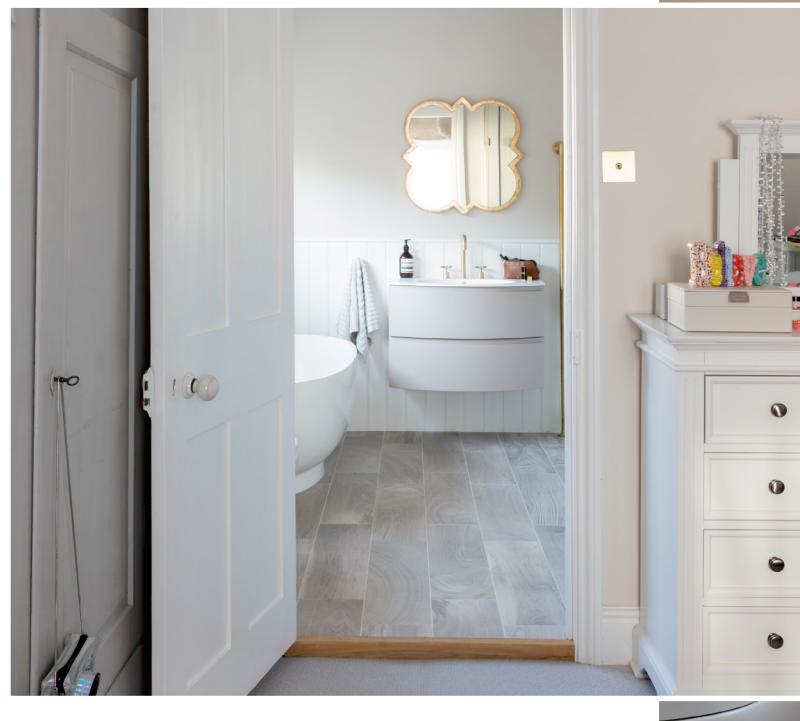
The clients: Claire Langham of Ciel Interior Design, who lives here with her husband and two young daughters.

Location: Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

The brief: Claire wanted the children's bathroom to be in keeping with the rest of the property she had designed, incorporating curved edges to create safe space for her daughters.

Cost: Around £14,000

"The design of this room started with the bath – Claire had already fallen in love with this egg-shaped tub before I had come on board. The soft curves of the bath led us to choose the coordinating curved vanity unit, which comes with two draws of practical storage space. The bathroom has two doors coming off it – one to the older daughter's bedroom and another onto the hallway – which meant we had to work with reduced dimensions. It was important to incorporate brass in the design, as the rest of the house has accents of the metallic throughout. Claire sourced the beautiful mirror above the basin, and the towel rail was a bespoke item we had made, which has plenty of space that allows towels to dry quickly."



A wall-hung vanity unit helps free up floor space and is easy to clean around.



→ The bathroom is accessible through two doorways: one from the eldest daughter's bedroom and another from the hallway.

← Concealing the toilet cistern creates a smart, clean look.

↑ A large freestanding bath – big enough for two – makes bath times easier, while the wall-mounted shower rinse helps with cleaning.

SOURCE BOOK

Aestus (01902 387080 or aestus.co.uk)

Architect Your Home (0800 051 5304 or architect-yourhome.com)

Britton Bathrooms (01322 473222 or brittonbathrooms.com)

Burlington Bathrooms (01322 473222 or burlingtonbathrooms.com)

Catalano (020 8685 6815 or catalano.co.uk)

CP Hart (0845 873 1121 or cphart.co.uk)

Crown (0870 240 1127 or crownpaints.co.uk)

Day True (020 7788 9229 or daytrue.com)

Drummonds (020 7376 4499 or drummonds-uk.com)

Laura Ashley (0333 200 8009 or lauraashley.com)

Mira Showers (01242 262888 or mirashowers.co.uk)

Ripples Bathrooms (0800 107 0700 or ripplesbathrooms.com)

Roper Rhodes (01225 303900 or roperrhodes.co.uk)

Stone & Ceramic Warehouse (020 8993 5545 or stoneandceramicwarehouse.co.uk)

VitrA (0125 750990 or vitra.co.uk)

Waters Baths of Ashbourne (01332 824166 or watersbaths.co.uk)

West One Bathrooms (0333 011 3333 or westonebathrooms.co.uk)

Window Film Company (020 3883 6460 or windowfilm.co.uk)