

How to PLAN THE *perfect* CLOAKROOM

Looking for ways to add a downstairs bathroom? From finding the space and maximising every inch to decorating ideas, we've asked the experts for their tips

Words: Yvette Murrell

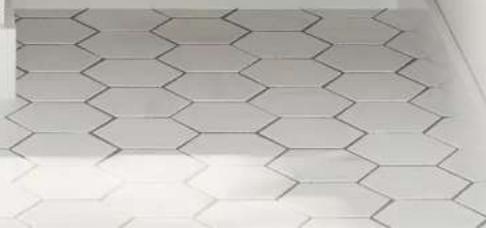


These days most of us will have a downstairs cloakroom, or we're strongly considering putting one in. In fact, any dwelling unit that has been constructed after 1999 will likely have a ground-floor toilet installed which has been designed to cater for any visiting wheelchair users as standard. Not only are they convenient to have for ourselves

or for when guests are allowed to visit, but they can add value to your home as they are an accessible option. Plus, they offer that all-important extra handwashing space as well as convenience. But with little wiggle room to play with, how can you ensure your cloakroom works well and looks good at the same time? We asked the experts to share their best pieces of advice... >



Built-in shelving utilises the full height of the wall, providing storage in this small space. Arena 600 console wall-hung unit in pure white gloss, £670, Crosswater.





WHERE CAN I FIND SPACE FOR A NEW CLOAKROOM?

"The most popular location is under the stairs. Generally, this is a very poorly used area and it can be renovated by utilising the space under the slope for the WC, with the basin at the other end of the room. Other solutions include sectioning off part of a utility, dividing a large hallway, renovating garage spaces, or even stealing some floor area from an old kitchen as part of a larger remodel or extension. A good cloakroom should measure around 80 x 120cm or 80 x 140cm, but this will of course depend on head heights and the position of the door. I would always recommend a door opens outwards, as this will make the space feel larger and much easier to use. When it comes to installation, the location of the soil pipe sometimes makes access difficult, which is a particular issue in terraced houses. Always seek advice of a trusted installer when considering building a cloakroom to ensure it can be done."

Vlogger Lily Pebbles opted for blush horizontal metro tiles, a concrete sink and decadent brass taps in her small but perfectly formed cloakroom, designed by Ripples.

Jo Sangster,
senior designer, Ripples



Ben Bryden, sales and marketing director, RAK Ceramics UK

HOW CAN I MAKE MY CLOAKROOM FEEL MORE SPACIOUS?

"Creating the feeling of space in what generally is the smallest room in the home may seem like a challenge, but with a bit of design-savvy thinking, it can be practical, stylish, and even look and feel bigger than it actually is. Firstly, it is important to keep things simple. Large-format tiles create the illusion of more room, which makes them a good option for the flooring. Avoid sanitaryware and furniture with a long profile, as this is more likely to encroach while drawing the eye, making the room appear small and cramped. Instead, opt for slim-line, low-projection basins and taps, which take up a small amount of space while maintaining maximum functionality."

An accent of colour is added to this cloakroom through half-height tiles, which allow the rest of the space to still feel light and airy. Corno wall-hung washbasin, £695, Kaldewei.



Faye Froy, marketing manager, Burlington

WHICH FITTINGS WILL WORK BEST?

"Wall-hung WCs and basins with chrome washstands are a popular choice because they're ideal for creating the illusion of more space since being able to see the floor tricks the eye. Taps with shorter projections are also a great solution as they fit perfectly into smaller areas. Clever storage is a must, so look for multi-functional pieces such as a small corner vanity with a cupboard or shelving under the basin, or fitted WC and basin solutions which can be installed along one wall and allow for countertop and storage space too." >

Burlington's freestanding corner vanity, shown matt white wood, is a clever option that incorporates storage while helping you to save some space.





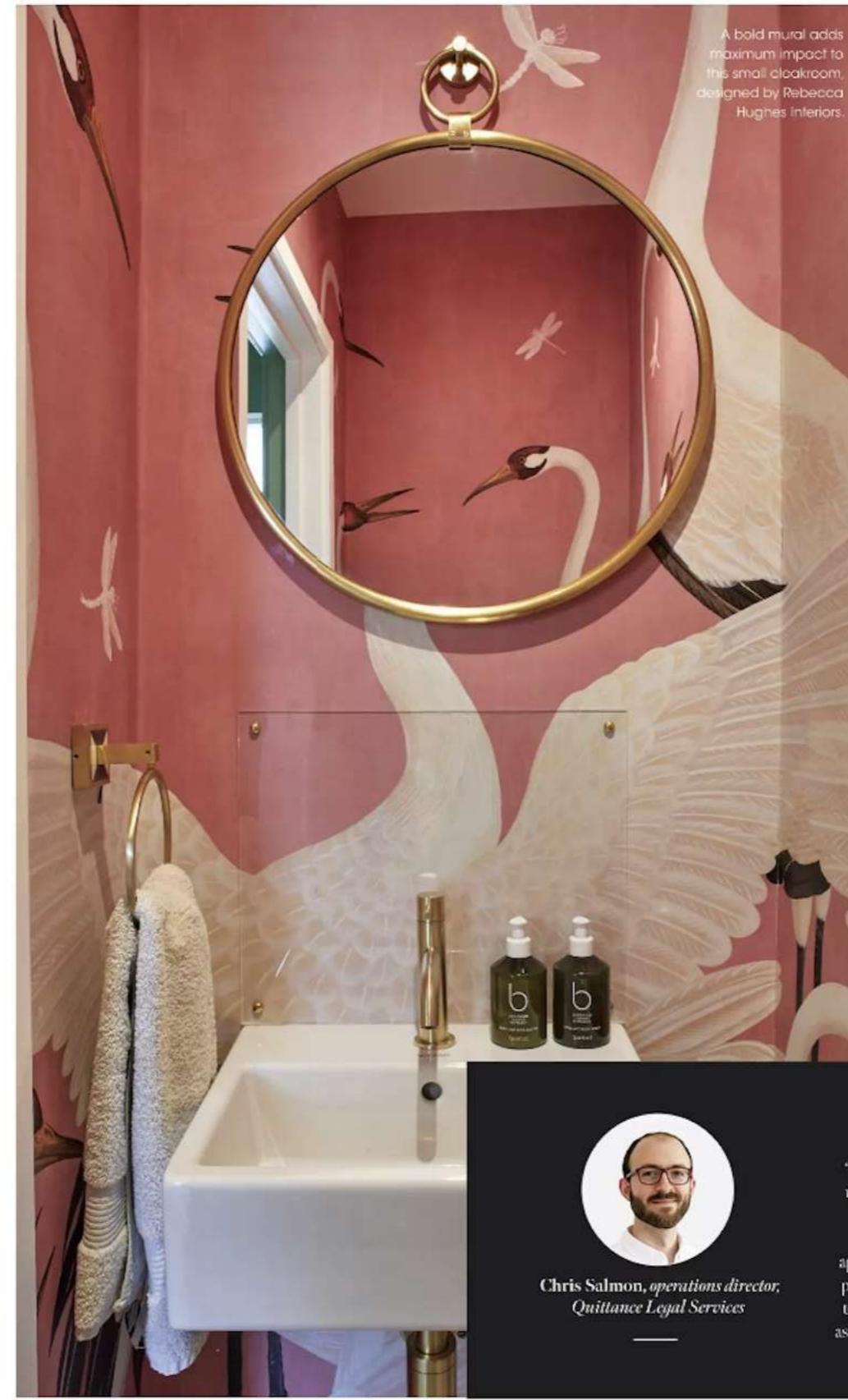
Mike Bennett,
consumer marketing manager, Geberit UK

HOW CAN I MAKE SURE MY CLOAKROOM IS EASY TO KEEP CLEAN?

"One solution to reduce the transfer of germs is to opt for products such as sensor-activated taps and flush plates. Likewise, handle-free furniture and sensor-activated lighting on cabinets will also help reduce unnecessary surface contact. Wall-hung fittings allow for easy cleaning below – vital for reaching any germs or dust that might be gathering out of sight. What's more, these designs will hide unsightly pipework behind the wall too – an added bonus."



Geberit's AquaClean Sela WC complete solution, £3654, is shown with the Sigma50 flush plate in white glass, £253; Acanto compact 60cm one-hole washbasin, £271; with washbasin unit in black, £660; and a floating shelf in black, £181, all from Geberit.



A bold mural adds maximum impact to this small cloakroom, designed by Rebecca Hughes Interiors.



Chris Salmon, operations director,
Quittance Legal Services



Derek Aaronson,
chief executive officer, NotJustTaps

WHAT ABOUT PLUMBING?

"Cloakrooms can often be small with a lot of pipework exposed, which can be less than ideal if you want to keep this space as neat and streamlined as possible. Consider building a vanity unit first, so this becomes the main focal point. You can then use this as a starting point and work around it using the existing space. Restrictive bathrooms such as cloakrooms can cause more spray from the taps, which can transfer onto hanging or stored clothes if it's a multi-purpose room, or even other people when washing their hands. Installing a quality aerator is ideal here as this will soften the flow of the water and cause less splashing."

WILL I NEED TO OBTAIN BUILDING REGULATION APPROVAL?

"If you are planning to replace fixtures and fittings on a like-for-like basis, you normally don't, unless you are making major material changes or installing an entire new space. New electrical circuits or alterations to existing ones are always 'notifiable' under Part P of the building regulations and will need to be signed off. Installing an extractor fan, for example, will need approval as it needs a new circuit and is a necessary addition if there is no external window. New plumbing from a basin or WC to an existing drainage stack or external drain will need approval to ensure there is adequate provision for drainage. Fortunately, tradespeople who are registered as 'competent persons' can often self-certify internal work. Depending on the size of your project, you may not need to arrange for a local building officer to inspect and approve the works." >

Samuel Heath's Landmark Pure mixer in urban brass, £1408, and Duravit's Vero handbasin, £194, both from CP Hart, are shown with the Lampas Marine tiles, £72 per sq m, from Topps Tiles.



Yousef Mansuri,
head of design, CP Hart

HOW CAN I REFRESH MY EXISTING CLOAKROOM?

"Creating a wow factor, a focal point is a must. Due to the lack of space your options are limited, so try a sculptural basin, a vanity in a bold colour, or different finishes for the brassware. A mirror with separate wall lights or a pendant will also create drama. As this is not the master suite, you can afford to be more creative and playful. How about injecting pattern and colour with wallpaper for a really impactful finish? The cloakroom isn't as steamy or wet as the main bathroom, so wallpaper is a safe option to personalise your space and create something a little different."

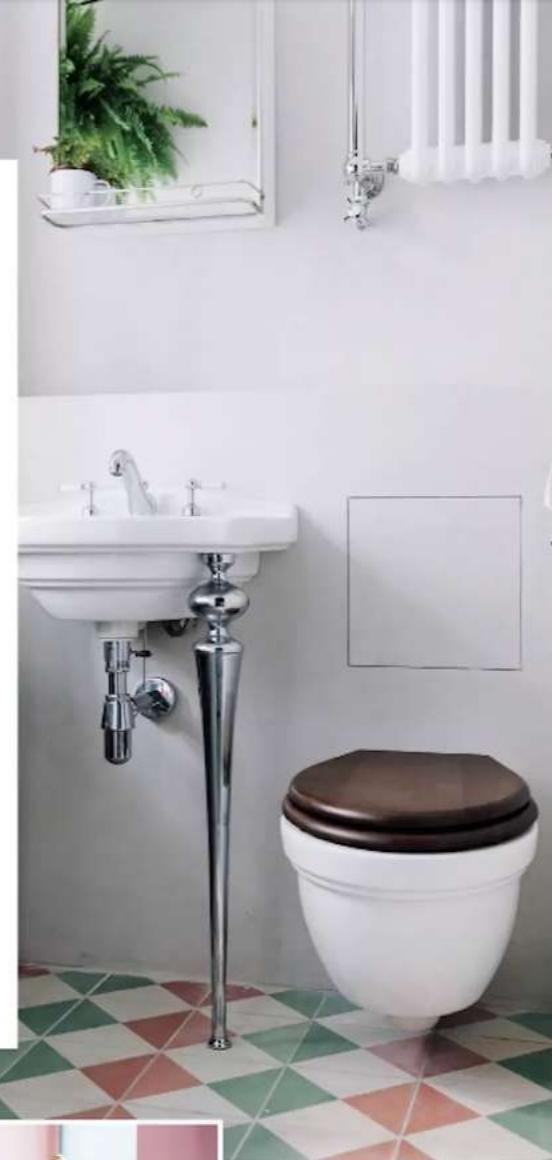


Mike Manders,
managing director, Lusso

WHAT IS THE BEST FLOORING FOR A CLOAKROOM?

"Statement designs are a great way to add some personality to your space – I love seeing statement tiles in a small bathroom. Not only will it give your scheme a contemporary feel, it will also leave you with those hotel-luxe vibes. If you are going bold with your flooring, I recommend keeping your walls simple. Monochrome is an all-round great choice for a small space, but you can also introduce on-trend shades such as dusky pink, sage green and other pastel tones to a compact cloakroom."

Volda basin, from £340, with chrome stand, from £1198; Manette taps, from £256; Volda back-to-wall toilet, from £713; walnut toilet seat, from £219, all The Albion Bath Company.



Emma Joyce,
brand manager, Perrin & Rowe

Perrin & Rowe's 4741 Aquitaine mixer with single lever in polished brass, around £612, packs a punch in Emily Murray's home, popularly known as The Pink House. Agnes basin by The London Basin Company.

WHAT TYPE OF BRASSWARE IS BEST FOR A SMALL SPACE?

"Cloakrooms are increasingly seen as a place to experiment and showcase your creativity. This bold, decorative approach suits taps in a gold or brass finish. Look out for satin and polished brass taps that are unlacquered, so the finishes will develop their own unique patina over time. Clever, space-saving designs are essential for compact cloakrooms. Wall-mounted mixer taps are a good choice as they allow for smaller basins and mean pipework can be hidden without the need for a pedestal. If wall-mounted taps are not an option, choose a monobloc style with a single lever to control flow and water temperature." **KB8**

In Stefanie's RADAR



Our sub editor Stefanie picks the latest designs she spotted...

Fresh florals

Founded at the end of 2020 by former events professional Sarah – whose freelance career suffered with the pandemic – The Way We Live London aims to bring beautiful hand-crafted basins and vanity units into our homes. This delicate Blossom design, £365, would be my top choice.



Dance the night away

Ballet and street dance have kept me sane over lockdown. I'm not the best to dance on so I've upgraded my bedroom set up with a dance floor – the same the Royal Ballet use. Now, if I could get the skills, too...

Cascade dance floor, £106.80 for a 2x1m practice mat. Harlequin Roots

Bright and orderly

My home office desk has to be neat. No exceptions. This medium-sized pegboard from Bock, £40, in a cheerful yellow is just the thing to keep notes and mementos all tidy.

