

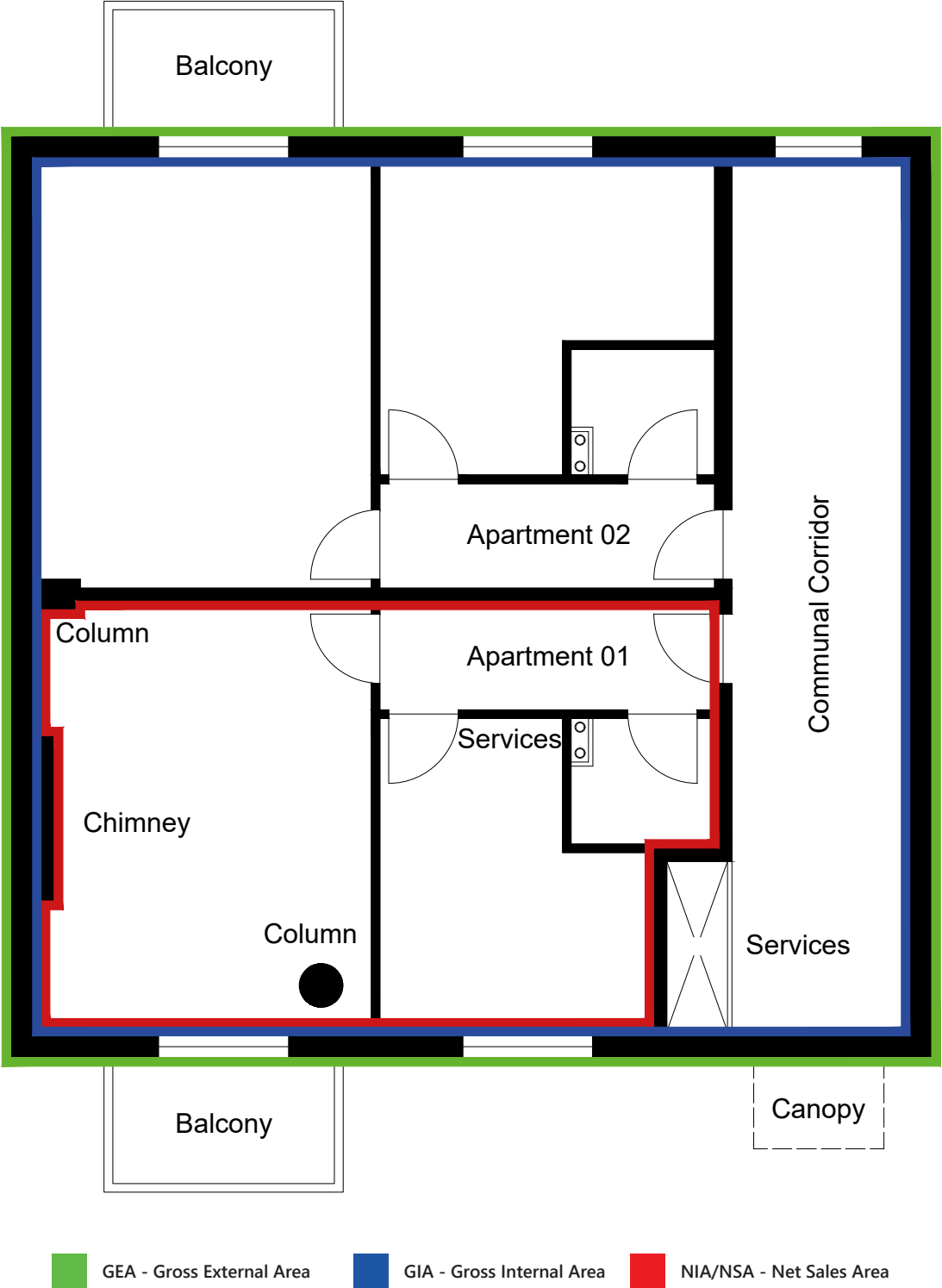
Bigger

It is clear that our homes are some of the smallest in Europe and that this does not relate to population density. We have an opportunity to increase the size of our homes without impacting on our natural environment if settlement densities are increased to similar European standards. This chapter looks at the current UK guidance and legislation relating to spatial housing design and aims to assess if these meet modern day living requirements and aspirations.

Counterbalance has made spatial recommendations for each room type showing how this extra space can best be utilised to improve living conditions and quality of life. There are a series of example housing types which demonstrate how these rooms come together to form bigger homes.

counterbalance

Counterbalance - How We Measure Areas



GEA - Gross External Area

Gross External Area is the area of a building measured externally at each floor level.

Including:

- Perimeter wall thickness and external projections
- Areas occupied by internal walls and partitions
- Columns, piers, chimney breasts, stairwells, lift-wells
- Atria, entrance halls, with clear height above
- Internal balconies
- Lift rooms, plant rooms, fuel stores, tank rooms
- Outbuildings with share walls with the main building
- Loading bays / Garages / Conservatories
- Areas with a headroom of less than 1.5m / Pavement vaults

Excluding:

- External open-sided balconies, covered ways and fire escapes
- Canopies
- Open vehicle parking areas, roof terraces, and the like
- Voids over or under structural, raked or stepped floors
- Greenhouses, garden stores, fuel stores, and the like in residential property

GIA - Gross Internal Area

Gross Internal Area is the area of a building measured to the internal face of the perimeter walls at each floor level

Including:

- Areas occupied by internal walls and partitions
- Columns, piers, chimney breasts, stairwells, liftwells,
- Internal projections, vertical ducts,
- Atria, entrance halls, with clear height above
- Internal open-sided balconies, walkways,
- Lift rooms, plant rooms, fuel stores, tank rooms
- All rooms private or common
- Voids over stairwells and lift shafts on upper floors
- Areas with a headroom of less than 1.5m
- Loading bays, Pavement vaults, Garages, Conservatories

Excluding:

- Perimeter wall thicknesses and external projections
- External open-sided balconies, covered ways and fire escapes
- Canopies
- Voids over or under structural, raked or stepped floors
- Greenhouses, garden stores, fuel stores, and the like in residential property

NIA - Net Internal Area / NSA - Net Sales Area

Net Internal Area is the usable area within a building measured to the internal face of the perimeter walls at each floor level.

Including:

- Atria with clear height above, measured at base level only
- Entrance halls within apartment or house
- Kitchens/Dining, Bathroom, En-suite, Bedrooms & Living
- Built-in units, cupboards, and usable areas
- Areas occupied by ventilation/ heating grilles
- Areas occupied by skirting and perimeter trunking
- Areas occupied by non-structural walls subdividing
- Structural columns within apartment or house

Excluding:

- Entrance halls, atria, landings and balconies used in common
- Common lift rooms, plant rooms and tank rooms
- Common stairwells, lift-wells and permanent lift lobbies
- Corridors and other circulation areas in common use
- Areas with a headroom of less than 1.5m
- Internal structural walls, walls enclosing excluded areas, columns, piers, chimney breasts, other projections, vertical ducts, walls separating tenancies

Bedroom Recommendations

Bedroom Recommendations

Wardrobes

Currently there is a requirement for only a single wardrobe in all bedrooms regardless of the number of people sleeping in the room. With a person in the UK owning on average 152 items. Counterbalance recommends that 2 wardrobes are included in all double and twin bedrooms with these ideally being built-in and constructed as a standard fit-out in a house or apartment.

Bedside Cabinets

There is a need for bedside cabinets as they provide vital storage for underwear and other miscellaneous items.

Chest of Drawers

Drawer provides storage for both clothing and general items such as toys, books and other personal items. We believe there should be a requirement for an extra piece of furniture which can be used for general storage or clothing within bedrooms and therefore should be included in all bedrooms. Alternatively, a larger wardrobe should to be provided.

Bed Sizes

The current policy/guidance does not provide guidance for young infants who may sleep in the same bedroom as adults. We believe there should be additional space allocated for a cot to be placed in the master bedroom.

We believe all bedrooms should have a King size bed (1500x2000mm). Sleep is extremely important to humans and can have a large impact on both the physical and mental health of an individual. Our Building Regulations should set a positive example in improving the health of the society they serve.

Desk - Home working

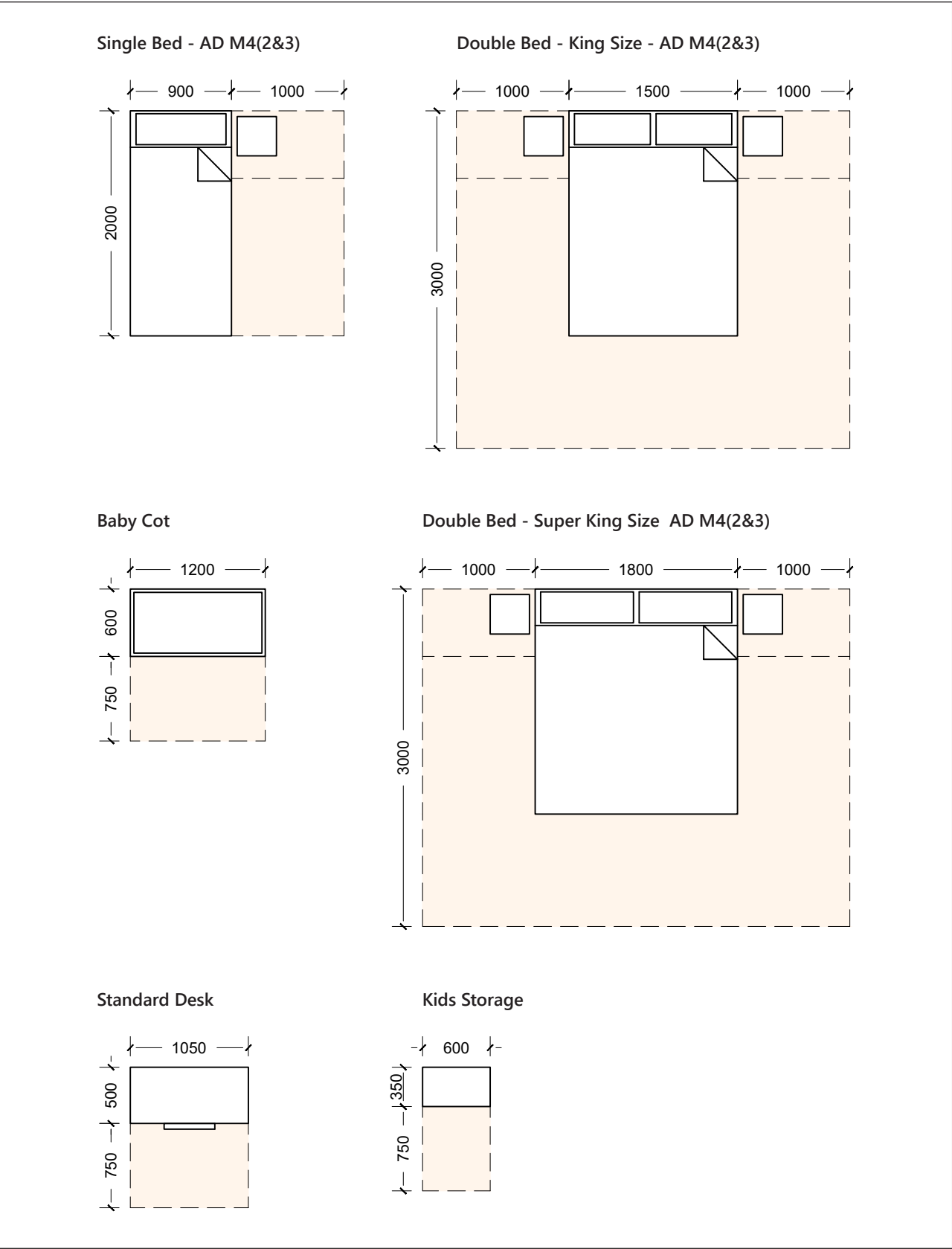
The requirement for desk space has been removed from non-wheelchair homes in our national or regional policy eliminating quiet space for children to complete homework and study for exams. In addition, with home working becoming common and the need for companies to be more flexible in the working arrangements it vital that this furniture space allocation is reinstated. Twin rooms should provide space for two desks in the event where children are sharing rooms, which will mean that twin bedrooms designed for children should be larger than a standard double bedroom for one or two adults.

Children Storage - Toys

There are no current spatial arrangements for children storage for toys and learning equipment, both naive and unhelpful for a family home which needs to be addressed within our regulations and guidance. Although we believe further research in this area is required, the very least a storage unit per child should be provided.

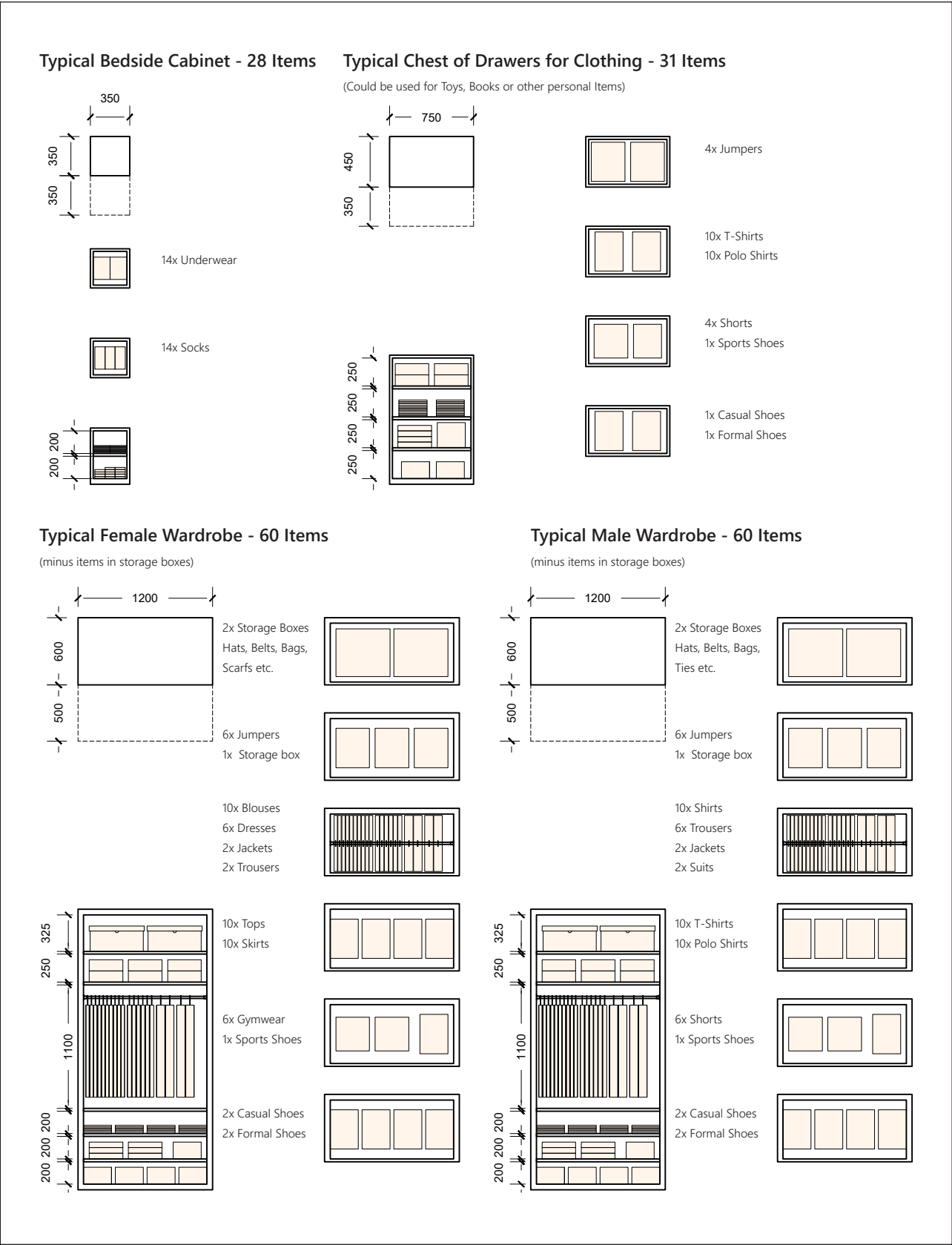
Bedroom Furniture Size Recommendations

Beds, Desks & Storage



Bedroom Furniture Size Recommendations

Bedroom Storage



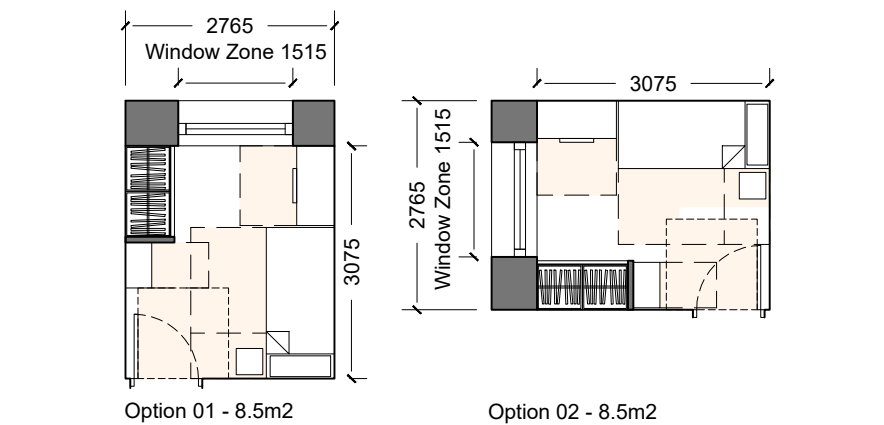
Bedroom Layout Recommendations

Counterbalance Single Bedroom Layouts

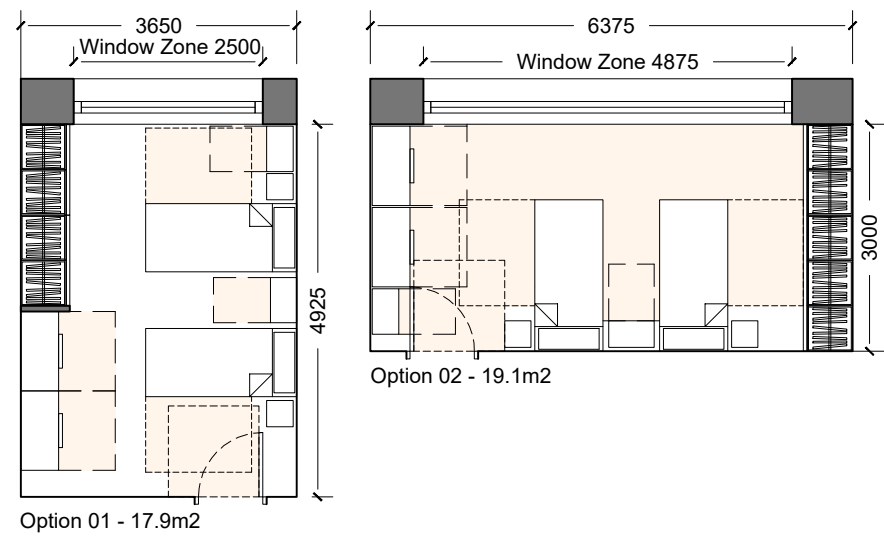
Layouts

At Counterbalance we have produced a series of bedroom layout examples which take into account the furniture research above and although larger in area provide space and suitable amount of furniture for individuals and families alongside space for wheelchair users/visitors. These bedrooms types comply with M4(3) layouts.

Single / Twin Bedroom Layout Examples - 1 Person/Child



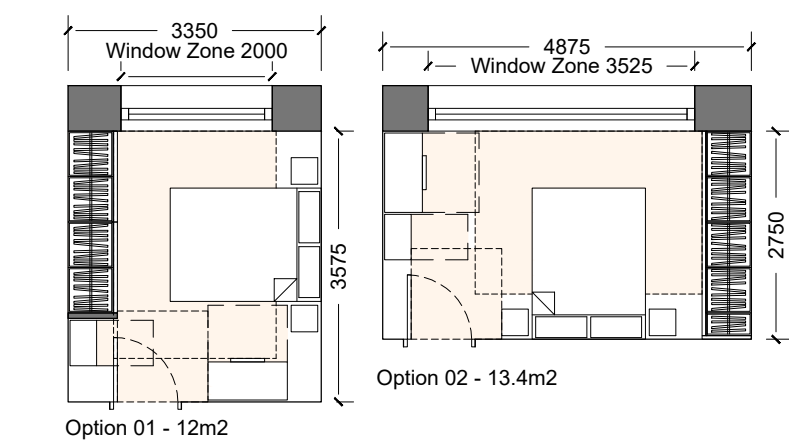
Twin Bedroom Layout Examples - 2 Person/Child



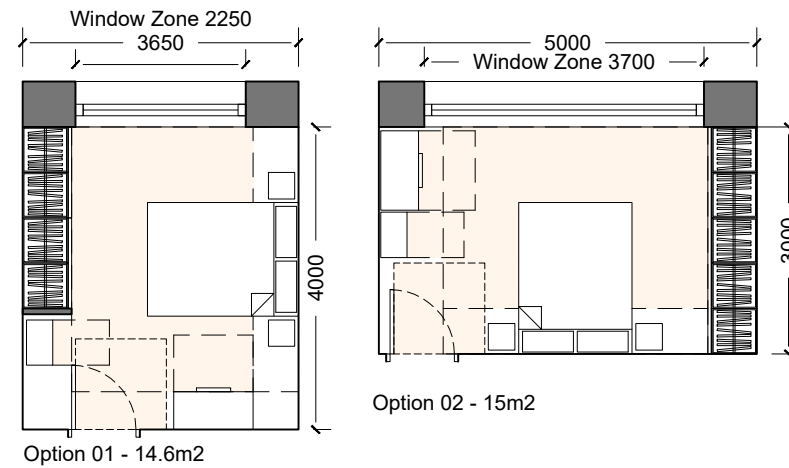
Bedroom Layout Recommendations

Counterbalance Double Bedroom Layouts

Secondary Bedroom Layout Example - 2 People/Adults



Primary Bedroom Layout Example - 2 People/Adults



Bathroom Recommendations

Bathroom Recommendations

Counterbalance Recommendations

Sanitary Provision

It is important to ensure you have the correct number and types of WC's, Showers and bathrooms within each dwelling. Where dwellings provide both an accessible bathroom with WC and a cloakroom within the same storey we would recommend that all en-suites comply with M4(2) requirements.

En-suites

Where there is a fully accessible shower room on the same storey as the principal bedroom, a separate room providing the bath need only comply with the requirements for a n M4(2) bathroom.

M4 (3) - Sanitary Provision Apartments

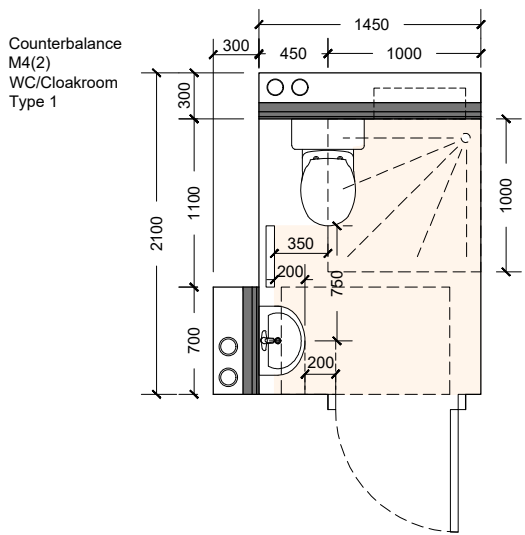
Bed spaces (persons)	Floors	Minimum Sanitary Provision
1	1	Bathroom with level access shower
2	1	Bathroom with level access shower
3	1	Bathroom with level access shower
4	1	Bathroom with level access shower and separate WC/cloakroom
5 or more	1	Bathroom with level access shower and separate WC/cloakroom (or second bathroom). Wheelchair accessible dwellings must also provide both a level access shower and a bath

M4 (3) - Sanitary Provision Houses and Duplexes

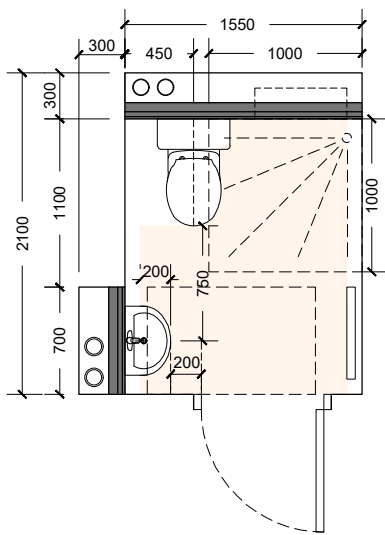
Bed spaces (persons)	Floors	Minimum Sanitary Provision
1	2+	Bathroom with level access shower on same level as principal bedroom + entrance storey WC/cloakroom (where bathroom not on the entrance storey)
2	2+	Bathroom with level access shower on same level as principal bedroom + entrance storey WC/cloakroom (where bathroom not on the entrance storey)
3	2+	Bathroom with level access shower on same level as principal bedroom + entrance storey WC/cloakroom (where bathroom not on the entrance storey)
4	2+	Bathroom with level access shower on same level as principal bedroom and entrance storey WC/cloakroom or second bathroom
5 or more	2+	Bathroom with level access shower on same level as principal bedroom and entrance storey WC/cloakroom or second bathroom. Wheelchair accessible dwellings must also provide both a level access shower and a bath.

M4 (2) WC/Shower Room

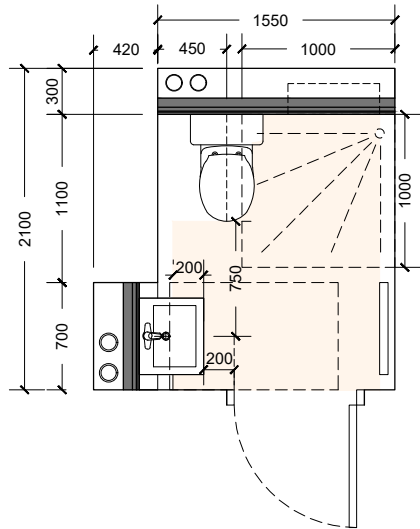
Type 01 - Service zones



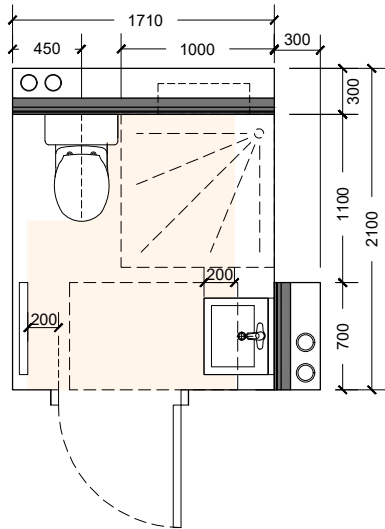
Type 02 - Larger towel heater



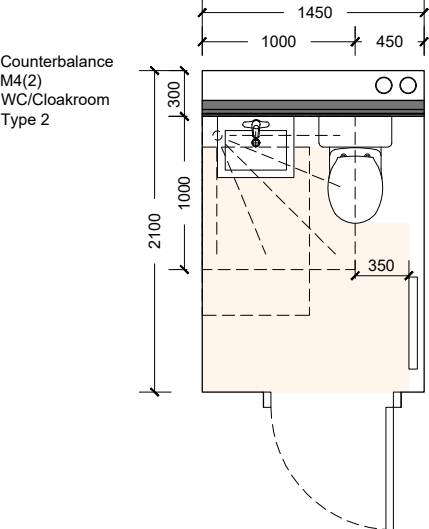
Type 03 - Larger hand basin



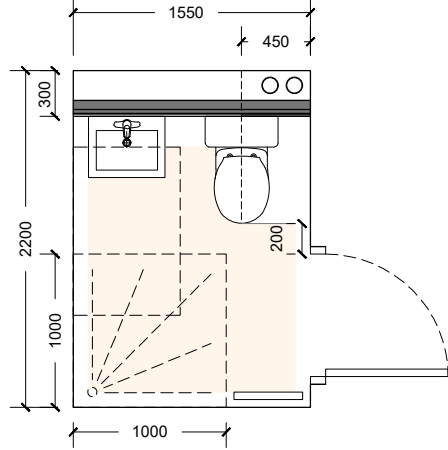
Type 04 - Increased shower zone



Type 05 - Single service zone



Type 06 - Alternative location of shower zone



Bathroom Recommendations

Counterbalance Recommendations

Category 2 - Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings - M4(2) - WC/Shower Room and Bathrooms

The overall size and layouts suggested in AD Part M are of a good standard. However, experience has shown that these layouts do not take into account the exact sanitary item sizes, service zones and construction tolerances. The Counterbalance layouts proposed in this section comply with AD Part M and allow for further flexibility in bathroom design, including the following improvements:

WC/ Shower Room

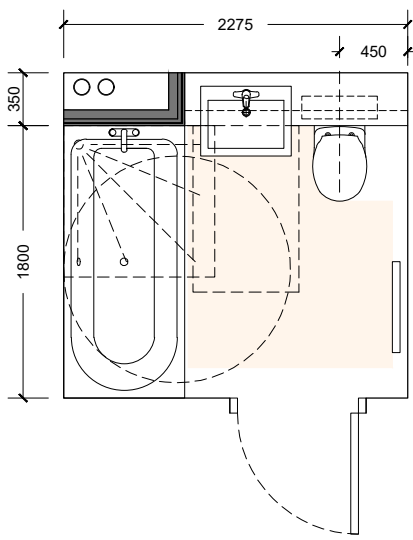
1. Hidden Service zone added which allows for storage cupboards to be installed without effecting access zones.
2. Extended width to accommodate a larger towel heater. (Needed for large towels if room is used as a shower)
3. A larger hand basin can be included. (No one likes to wash their hands in those small basins)
4. Re-arrangement of shower position allows for a shower to be installed without needing to remove or change location of WC or hand basin. (AD Part M layouts are not adaptable without complete refurbishment)

Bathroom

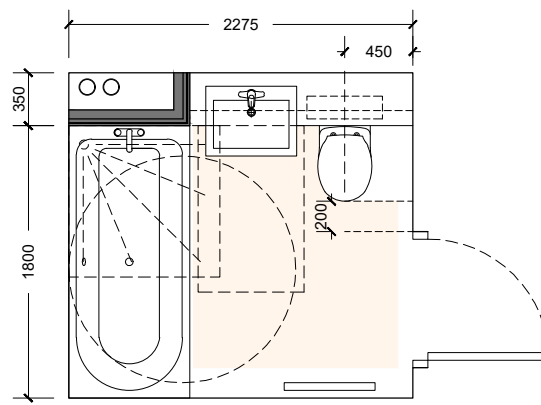
5. Hidden Service zone added which allows for storage cupboards to be installed without effecting access zones.
6. A larger hand basin can be installed without effecting access zone. (Allows for large range of basins to be used)
7. Increased size of bathroom takes account of construction tolerances to ensure access zones are met.
8. These bathrooms allow for a 800x1800mm bath (Taller end-users will appreciate this improvement)

M4 (2) Bathrooms

Type 01 - Door Head-on



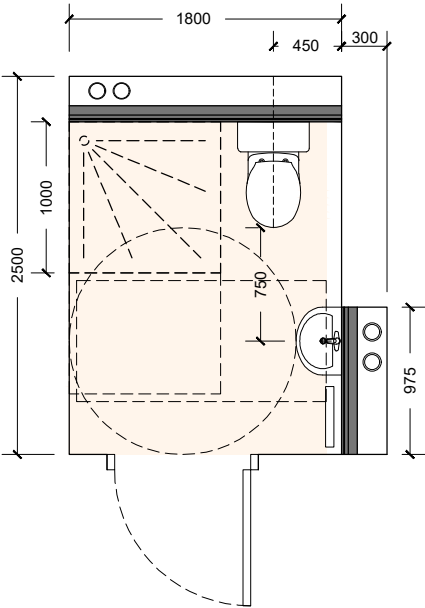
Type 02 - Door Side-on



Bathroom Recommendations

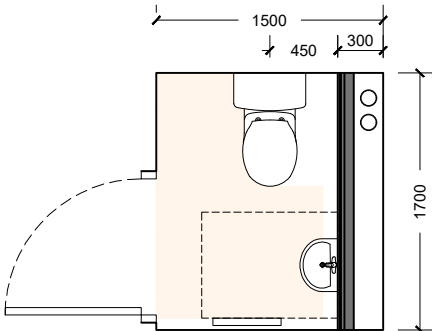
M4 (3) WC/Shower Room

Type 01 - WC / Adaptable Shower Room

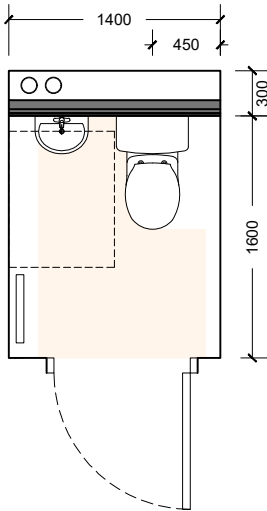


2nd WC/Cloakroom per floor

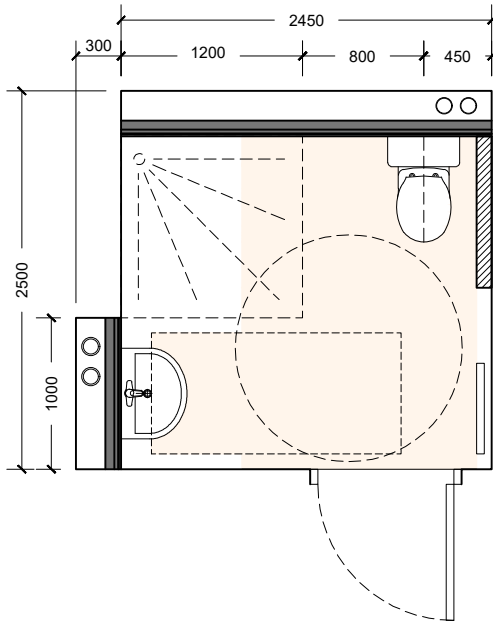
Type 01



Type 02



Type 01 - Level access shower Room



Counterbalance Recommendations

Category 3 - Wheelchair User Dwellings - M4(3) - WC/Shower Room and Bathrooms

WC/ Shower Room / 2nd W/C per Floor

- Hidden Service zone added which allows for storage cupboards to be installed without effecting access zones.
- Increased room width to allow for a larger size of hand basin. (No one likes to wash their hands in those small basins)

Bathroom

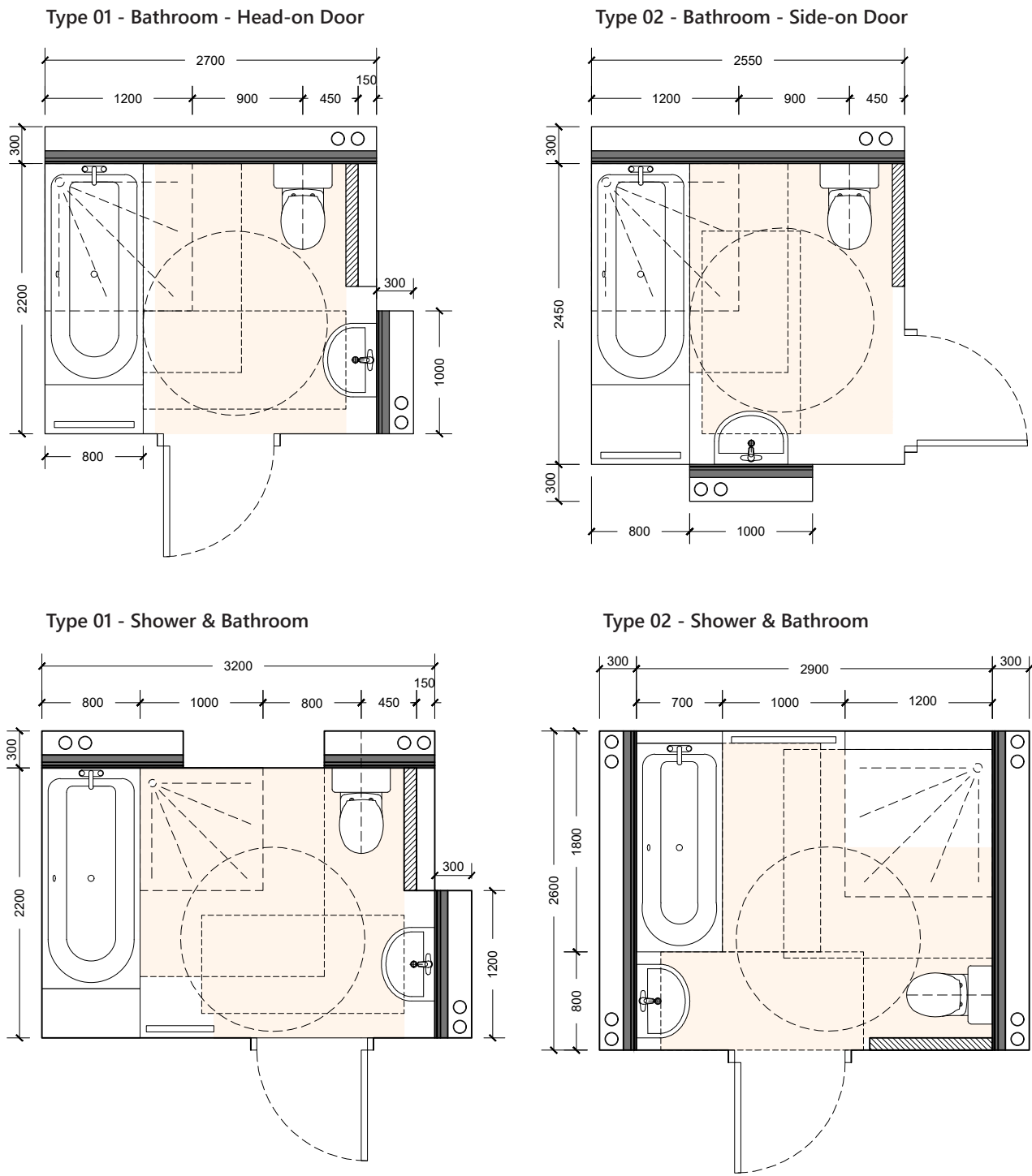
- Hidden Service zone added which allows for storage cupboards to be installed without effecting access zones.
- Larger hand basin can be installed without effecting access zone. (Allows for large range of basins to be used)
- Increased size of bathroom takes account of construction tolerances to ensure access zones are met.
- These bathrooms allow for a 800x1800mm bath (Taller end-users will appreciate this improvement)

Notes:

- Ensure all doors are outward opening and have a minimum of 850mm clear opening for all M4(3) bathrooms; door nibs are at least 300mm on both sides of the door.
- M4(3) bathrooms can lead to 3 sets of soil vent pipes (SVP) due to the large sizes of the rooms, it is advised to design all bathrooms as accessible pre-planning allowing for additional SVP's. (It is easier to remove the SVP later in the project once the fit out of the bathrooms has been confirmed with the client or housing association).

Bathroom Recommendations

M4 (3) Bathroom / Bath & Shower Room

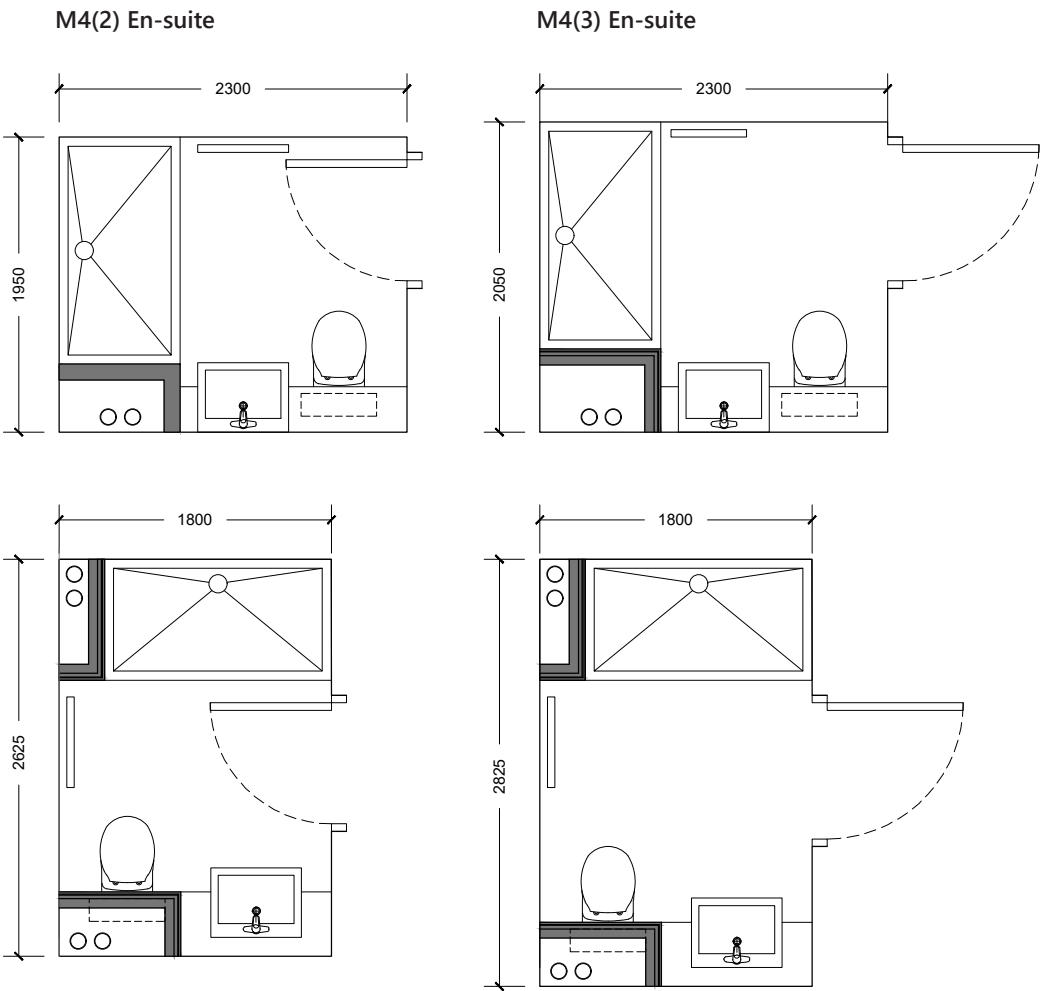


Bedroom En-suites

For AD Part M M4(2) dwellings the guidance suggests as follows: "Every dwelling has a bathroom that contains a WC, a basin and a bath, that is located on the same floor as the double bedroom, described as the principal bedroom in paragraph 2.25b." This then allows for en-suite bathrooms to be smaller and comply with M4(1) WC and basin requirements only.

For AD Part M4(3) dwellings the guidance is as follows: "Where there is a fully accessible shower room on the same storey as the principal bedroom, a separate room providing the bath need only comply with the requirements set out in paragraph 2.29 for a category 2 bathroom."

This should not be used, however, as a way for en-suites to be too small to be accessible without walking side wards into the room. We have, therefore, designed a series of en-suite layouts which provide a comfortable size for every day use. They also provide larger door nibs which, although not required under the AD Part M guidance, enable wheelchair users to access all rooms within a home.



Kitchen Recommendations

counterbalance

Kitchen Recommendations

Counterbalance Recommendations

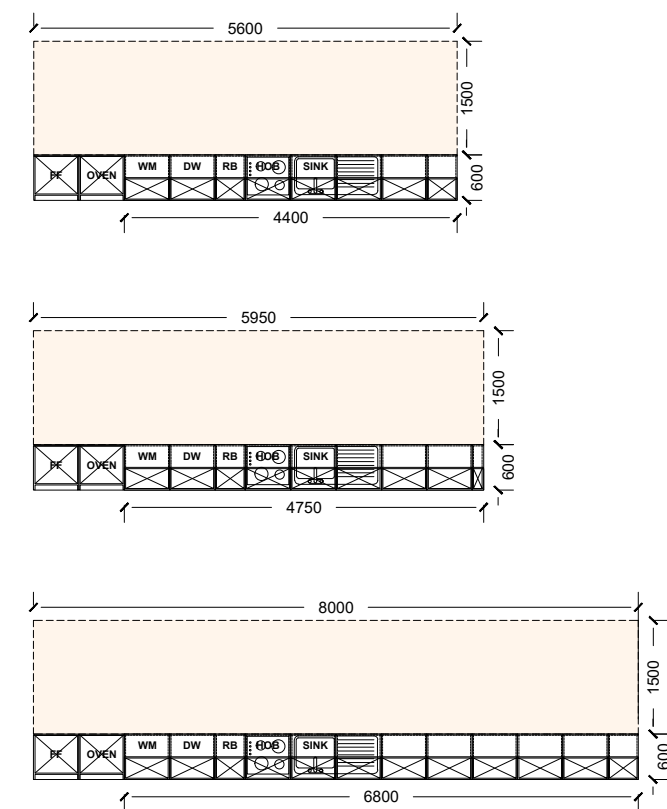
Kitchen

We recommend that for M4(3) homes standards are followed. The kitchens layouts could be changed to a U or L shape layout as long as a 1500mm access zone is provided. For M4(3) homes, Building Regulations Approved Document Part M - Access to and use of buildings Volume 1 Dwellings guidance should be followed, however consideration for tolerances should be taken into account.

We recommend that washing machines are housed in M&E Cupboards within the hallways, however, the additional space should be maintained in the kitchen.

Combined Rooms

These rooms can be combined, for M4(3) homes area requirements in Building Regulations Approved Document Part M - Access to and use of buildings Volume 1 Dwellings guidance should be followed.



Dining Room Recommendations

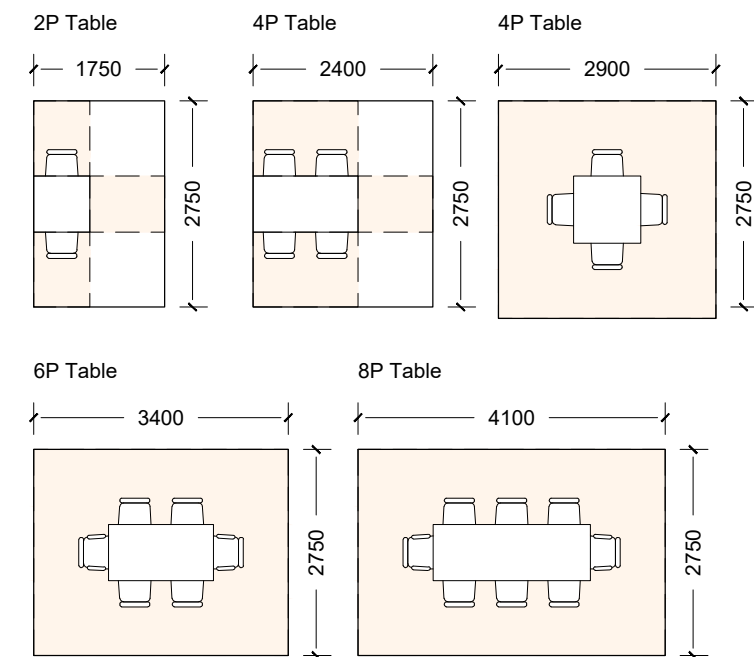
counterbalance

Dining Room Recommendations

Counterbalance Recommendations

Dining Room

We recommend that for every bedroom place a dining room place is provided. Dining room table sizes should be prescribed in the Building Regulations and space around the table should comply with M4(3) spatial requirements of 1000mm free area.



Living Room Recommendations

counterbalance

Living Room Recommendations

Counterbalance Recommendations

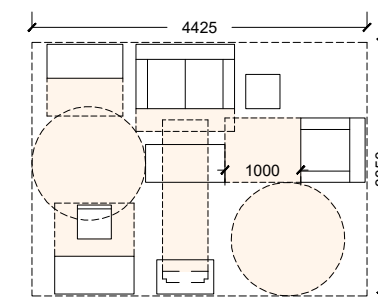
Living Room

We recommend that all living spaces contain as a minimum the following furniture:

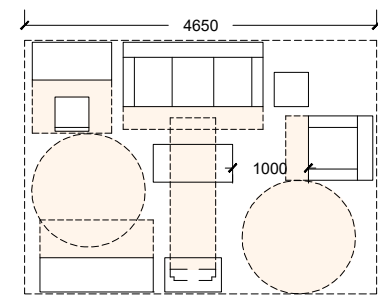
- Desk & Chair
- Storage Unit (size depends on home bed-spaces as stated in AD Part M Vol 1)
- TV / Sideboard
- Coffee Table
- Sofas containing space for the number of bed spaces

All living room should comply with M4(3) homes provide at least 1000mm access zones between all furniture and clear access to the windows in the room.

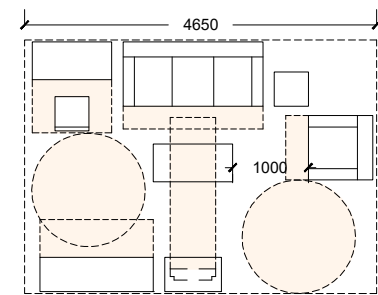
1 Bedroom



2 Bedroom



3 Bedroom



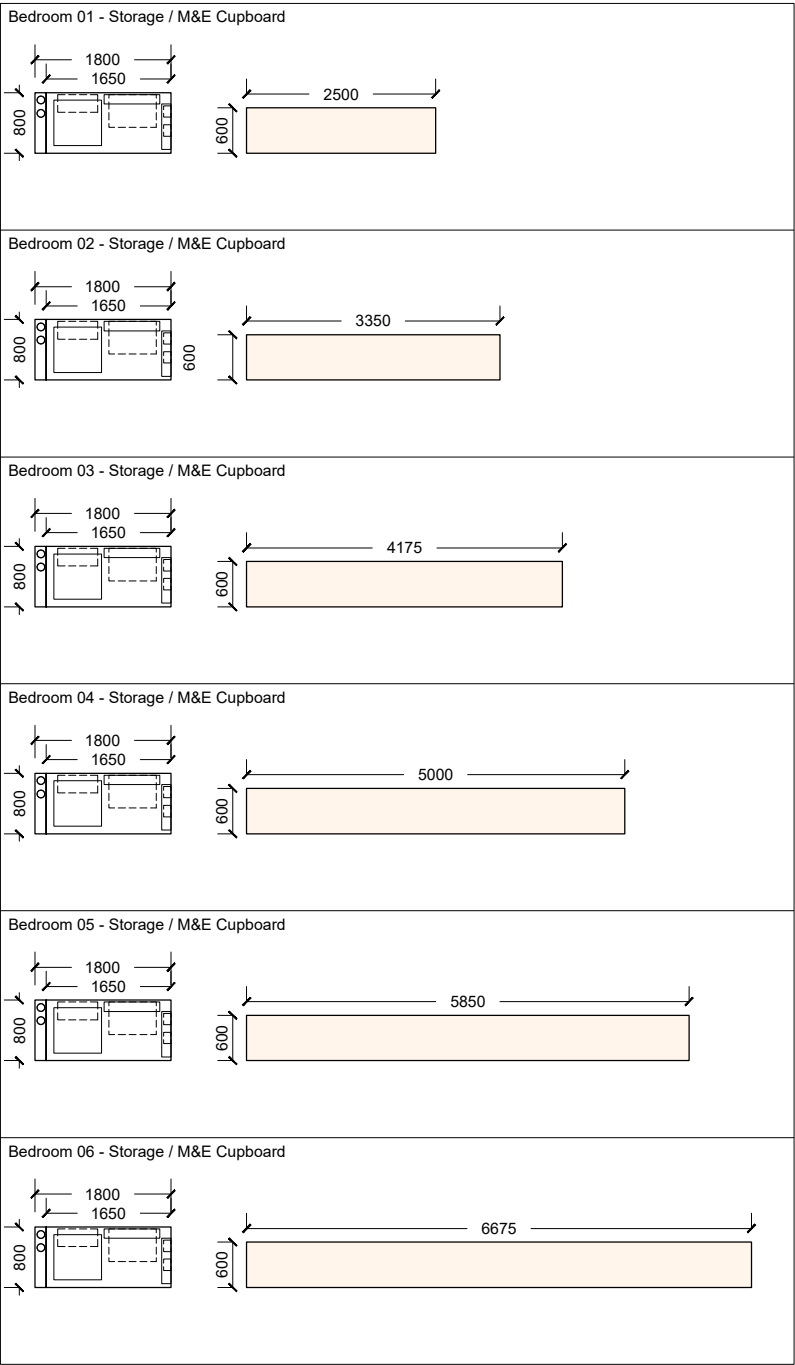
Storage & Circulation Recommendations

Counterbalance Recommendations

Counterbalance recommends that the storage mentioned in the National Described Space Standard should be on top of a standard M&E cupboard and should be provided in hallways where possible. We accept that this can be difficult when hallways are short (especially in 1 bedroom homes) and can lead to undesirable plans, therefore, it should be provided in other rooms as additional space on top of the area/advice given for the relevant room.

The diagram to the right demonstrates the amount of storage that is required with an ideal depth of 600mm cupboards. Deep and shallow storage cupboards should be avoided to ensure the storage is functional and useful for the end user.

Storage & M&E Cupboard



Laundry Room Recommendations

Counterbalance Recommendations

In the UK, a laundry room is an important feature in an apartment because it supports practical, space-efficient living and suits the country's climate and lifestyle. With frequent rain and limited outdoor drying opportunities, having a dedicated indoor space for washing and drying clothes is especially valuable. A laundry room helps keep moisture, noise, and clutter away from main living areas, which is particularly important in smaller UK flats. It also saves residents time and money by reducing reliance on communal laundrettes, while allowing appliances to be used more efficiently and safely. Overall, a laundry room improves day-to-day convenience, organisation, and comfort for apartment living in the UK, so why do we not include them in minimum spatial requirements?

The diagram to the right demonstrates the amount of space that is required with a laundry room. This includes space for a washing machine, drying machine, sink, cupboard for iron board, clothes drying area.

counterbalance

Laundry Room

