

# 3 Space

Adequate space was felt to be crucial for wellbeing, especially mental and social wellbeing. Not having enough space was thought to have a negative impact on relationships and cause stress.

Space within the home can be thought of in terms of specific dimensions or room layouts, in terms of functional requirements (such as space for storage, cooking or washing) or in terms of social requirements (such as space to be with others). The research revealed that people primarily thought about their space needs in terms of functional and social requirements.

**“ Space for time together and time apart. ”**



**Key priorities included basic functionality**  
– space for cooking, eating, sleeping,  
washing, and depending on the household,  
space for children to play and for  
children or adults to study or work.

**“Everyone needs somewhere to sleep, to  
have family time and somewhere to cook.”**

When we forced people to make trade-offs against other dimensions of the Standard, people were often willing to sacrifice space in favour of things like affordability. Nevertheless, although people are willing to compromise in some areas, there are many aspects of space which were felt to be essential requirements in the Standard.

## Essentials

### ■ **The number of bedrooms in the home is adequate for all members of the household**

Having somewhere to sleep was seen as one of the most basic aspects of a home. The ability to have a good night's sleep was widely understood to be essential for physical and mental wellbeing.

Amongst households with children, the extent to which siblings should be required to share bedrooms was much debated. By and large, some degree of sharing was felt to be acceptable but circumstances such as the genders and ages of the children had to be considered. They also discussed other factors such as differing personalities and additional needs such as behavioural issues that meant it was difficult to develop a 'one size fits all' consensus.

**“What I do think is important is that living space can be differentiated from sleeping space.”**

**“I'd say if you were forced to sleep in your living space, that's unacceptable.”**

### ■ **There is enough space to allow all members of the household to have privacy, for example when they wish to be alone**

The importance of privacy and having space to yourself was closely related to people's beliefs about what 'home' means: a place of sanctuary and peace, and where you can be yourself.

**“Personal space where you can have me-time, not under each other's feet.”**

**“[Home means] peace of mind, away from everything, on my own, away from problems of noise, away from work and confusions.”**

### ■ **There is enough space for all members of the household to comfortably spend time together in the same room**

Home was defined by many in terms of a place where you can be with other people:

**“For us it's just a place where you can be together.”**

People valued being able to relax with the other members of their household on a day-to-day basis, doing things such as socialising, eating together or watching television.

- **There is adequate space to prepare and cook food**

Having space to prepare and cook food was one of the most important functional uses of space. It was noted that not everybody chooses to cook and prepare food all of the time, but nevertheless it was felt that being able to do so was an essential feature of a home that supports physical wellbeing.

- **There is adequate space to store essential items, such as a reasonable amount of clothes, towels and bedding**

Storage space was an important consideration. Not having adequate storage was felt to cause stress as well as practical difficulties.

**“Storage so you can put everything away so it’s not cluttered and then you can relax.”**

The public discussed what an acceptable amount of storage would be. This was broken down into storage for the most essential day-to-day items, as well as storage for ‘nice to have’ personal items which was deemed to be somewhat less important.

## Tradables

**A home must meet 3 of 7 of these statements to meet the Living Home Standard**

- **There are enough bathroom facilities for everyone living in the household to be able to use them at a time suitable for their needs**

Participants were agreed that a home needed to have enough bathroom facilities to meet the needs of all of those living there. However, there were different views about what this might look like. Some participants thought that families with two or three children would need two bathrooms, while others felt that this was more of a desirable than an essential.

**“Families need at least two bathrooms. I can hear my children in the morning shouting at each other. One thinks he’s the only one that needs to get ready in the morning.”**

It was generally acknowledged that some level of compromise between household members was to be expected when it came to using bathroom facilities. Compared to other space requirements, additional bathrooms were felt to be less important.

- **The home has access to outdoor space, for example a private or shared garden, or balcony**

Access to outdoor space was a topic that came up frequently in discussions, however, there was considerable variation in the level of importance that people attached to this.

Some felt quite strongly that access to outdoor space such as a garden was essential and important for wellbeing.

**“If I didn’t have a garden I’d be depressed.”**

Outdoor space was more likely to be considered essential for families with children, as participants highlighted the importance of children being able to play outside and get fresh air – both for mental and physical wellbeing. Some felt that the need for a garden could be partly dependent on whether there were local parks where children could play instead.

On the other hand, some participants felt quite strongly that outside space was too much to expect from the Standard. The combination of strong views means that it was felt most appropriate that this was a tradable part of the Standard.

- **There is enough space to have visitors during the day or evening**

When people discussed what home meant to them, many spoke about the social function of a home, including spending time with visiting family or friends.

Yet, when asked to consider whether space to accommodate visitors was an essential part of a home that met the definition of the Standard, views were mixed. Many thought that at least some space for visitors was essential, because spending time with friends and family is important for social wellbeing. However views differed considerably in terms of what space for visitors might look like.

**“Certainly we all ought to be able to entertain a couple for dinner and find room for any children to have a friend over for tea”**

By contrast, some dismissed space for visitors as an essential part of the Standard, because they felt that there were other opportunities to socialise outside the home. Therefore this is a tradable part of the Standard.

- **There is enough space for members of the household to study or do work or homework if they need to**

The public highlighted how important it was for school-age children to have space to be able to complete their homework. This was felt to be fundamental as a part of education, and therefore contributed to overall wellbeing and life opportunities of children. Discussion also drew attention to the fact that some adults need similar space for studying or for working at home.

Although this attribute was felt to be essential for those with school age children and those who have jobs that require them to work from home, it has been included in the Standard as tradable. This is in recognition of the fact that it was not considered relevant for people who do not have these needs.

- **There is enough space for a guest to stay overnight, for instance on a sofa or sofa bed**

Though it was acknowledged that this isn't important for all, many felt it was important to have enough space for friends or family to be able to stay overnight from time to time. There was however broad agreement that it wasn't essential to have a 'spare room' and that it was sufficient to have somewhere for people to sleep including a sofa or sofa bed.

**“Having enough space for family to stay overnight ... might be essential for some but unnecessary for others.”**

- **There is enough space to store domestic items like vacuum cleaners and ironing boards to keep them out of the way**

- **There is enough space to store some personal belongings, such as books or children's toys**

Storage space was felt to be an important consideration but people were often willing to sacrifice the amount of storage for other more important considerations.

Storage of the most important household items is an essential attribute in the Standard, however recognising that storage is also needed for other purposes, including bulky items and personal belongings, two additional attributes were included amongst the list of tradable elements of the space dimension of the Standard.

