

Going up: the rise of the home lift

Do a Michael Gove and level up — by installing an elevator in your property, writes Jayne Dowle

Fitting a home elevator should be an altogether more uplifting experience than Michael Gove had this week when the BBC lift he was in got firmly stuck.

“Not only does a lift make a home more accessible, especially if you are elderly or live in a multigenerational household, it can also open up a difficult-to-reach part of the house, such as the attic,” says David Schill, marketing director of *Aritco*, a global lift manufacturer headquartered in Sweden.

Sales of home lifts at the British company *Premier Lifts* have more than tripled since the pandemic began. Their newfound appeal is a combination of working from home in shared living space — private lift to the home office, anyone? — and the realisation from being at home all day that we need help moving heavy items such as furniture, laundry baskets and vacuum cleaners.

The image of cheery pensioners waving from stairlifts is being superseded by futuristic models straight out of *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*. Reluctant downsizers may consider the investment — from about £20,000, for a *Aritco*



Sales of home lifts at the British company Premier Lifts have more than tripled since the pandemic began

model, says Schill — worthwhile if it buys a few extra years in their cherished family home.

“Increasingly, many seniors are choosing to ‘age in place’; that is, remain in their family home, on their own terms,” says Yola Mealing, head of marketing at the home lift company *Stiltz Limited*. Lifts are now seen as valuable add-ons, boosting a home’s value by as much as 25 per cent, according to *Premier*.

What is a home lift?

There are four types of home lift, says the Lift and Escalator Industry Association (LEIA); a fully enclosed or partially enclosed cabin that moves between floors with no shaft; a vertical lifting platform that travels within an enclosed shaft for two to four floors; and a discreet multi-floor, fully

enclosed cabin lift that travels within a shaft with only the landing doors visible.

Shaftless lifts, which require only an aperture in the ceiling, save space and reduce the need for major structural work, but usually will serve only two floors. Home lifts are operated by a cable drive or hydraulics, which are smoother and quieter.

Home lifts are highly customisable, designed bespoke to match existing decor, or as a stand-out feature in glass with various lighting options. Schill says his company is experimenting with built-in video screens so family members can speak and post messages to each other: “I think we are going to see a lot more customisation coming on, digital solutions, using the lift as entertainment.”

First steps

There are hundreds of lift companies in the UK and Europe. A good starting point is to look for a manufacturer or supplier belonging to the [LEIA](#), although not all reputable home lift companies hold membership.

LEIA members are certified to strict health and safety and quality standards, and the regulatory body publishes a [useful guide to choosing and buying a lift](#) on its website, [leia.co.uk](#).

Minimum space required

Space-saving designs are democratising the market. Stiltz claims its compact two-person model, Duo, (£17,950, excluding VAT), is one of the smallest domestic lifts at less than a square metre (0.55 sq m), equivalent to a small to medium-sized armchair. Consider the size of the lift cabin for the people who will use it, door opening sizes, and position of the mechanical arrangement. If your home is suitable, a lift can be added outside.

Design and installation

From deciding on the lift company to zipping up and down in comfort, a home lift installation can take up to six months, says Premier. The company should complete a site survey and undertake a risk assessment before a deal is agreed.

Costs

Costs differ depending on style and materials and the number of floors the lift connects. Bespoke glass lifts, for example, can exceed £300,000. For a typical two-floor shaft lift with specialist finishes such as natural/coloured/patterned steel, marble or wood, Premier quotes an average price of £30,000-£40,000, but the base price in the company's ECO range is £16,000, excluding VAT.

If you or a resident family member has a registered disability, the cost of lift installation is VAT exempt and, if you're in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, you could be eligible for a government grant of up to £36,000 towards installing a lift. Find more information at [gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants](#).

A 12-month warranty should

come as standard, with at least one service visit included. Most manufacturers offer aftercare packages with a call-out service in case a cabinet minister gets stuck — or of any other mishaps.

Legislation

The LEIA says that the installation of a “vertical lifting appliance” in your home does not require planning permission, but building control approval is necessary if the installation involves the alteration of the structural integrity of your home.

The type and location of the lift will determine the extent and complexity of building works required. Your chosen lift manufacturer/supplier should advise on the necessary alterations.

You should check that the lift itself and installation is compliant with British and European safety standards and relevant disability legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Your manufacturer/installer should also follow legal standards for fire protection. ■