

# Guarding to treads and risers

(Withdrawn – January 2024)

The Technical Guidance Notes are produced by NHBC as guidance solely for our builder customers as to how to interpret the technical requirements in relation to the warranty cover provided by NHBC under its Buildmark, Buildmark Choice, Buildmark Link, Buildmark Solo, Buildmark Connect or any similar product from time to time. It has not been created or intended for distribution or use outside of that purpose. The information contained in this Technical Guidance Note does not constitute advice and is not to be relied upon by any third party. Nothing in this Technical Guidance Note is intended to, nor should it be taken to, create any legal or contractual relationship. Any third party who chooses to rely upon the information contained in the Technical Guidance Notes shall do so entirely at their own risk and NHBC accepts no duty of care or liability, however caused, in connection with its use or reliance by any third party.

## Question

On stairs, does the maximum permitted opening in the guarding include the triangle formed between the tread, the riser and the lower edge of the guarding?

## Considerations

- Approved Document K (England & Wales), Scottish Building Standards Technical Handbook Domestic Section 4.4 and Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) Technical Handbook H, all say that to prevent children falling through or being held fast by the guarding, the construction should be such that a 100mm sphere cannot pass through any opening in it.
- NHBC Standards clause 6.6 - S11 contains a diagram showing the maximum permitted openings within the guarding and between a floor and lower rail to guarding on a landing. The diagram does not include the triangular void formed between a tread and riser.
- The risk of a child getting trapped by the guarding on communal stairs, where children would normally have limited and supervised access, is considered relatively low. Inside dwellings where a child may have unsupervised access to the stairs the risk of becoming trapped is greater.

## Answer

In dwellings any triangular opening formed between the tread, riser and lower rail to the guarding should not pass a 100mm sphere (see diagram 1).

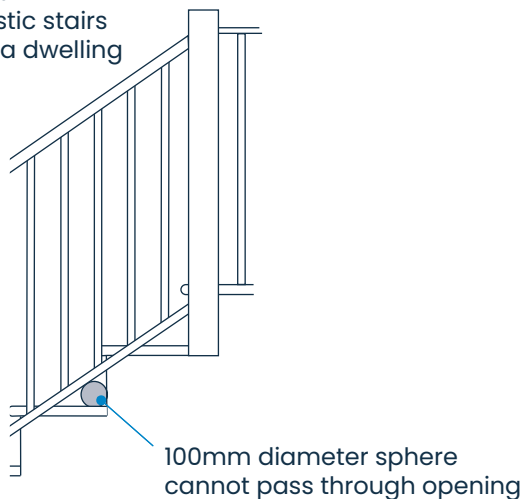
On communal stairs a larger triangular gap is acceptable providing the bottom of the guarding is not more than 50mm above the pitch line as shown in diagram 2.

# Title

(Withdrawn 20XX)

## Diagram 1

Domestic stairs  
within a dwelling



Guarding detail showing triangular opening between tread, riser and bottom rail to guarding

## Diagram 2

Communal stairs –  
Acceptable openings in  
guarding to stairs

