



Furniture Industry Research Association

Technical Information Article

What do I need to know to sell highchairs in the UK?

This document contains a summary of highchair testing and specification requirements taking account of the latest standards and Regulations.

Regulations

Whilst children's highchairs do not have a specific European Directive or Regulation, they do fall under the scope of the General Product Safety Directive (GPSD) 2001/95/EC. The main aim of this Directive is to ensure that only safe products are placed on the market.

The Directive itself is implemented into UK Law in 2005 as Statutory Instrument 2005 No.1803 the General Product Safety Regulations.

Whilst the Regulations do not make reference to specific test methods, they do point the manufacturer or designer towards any published European or National standards as well as best practice guidelines if no specific standard is available.

It is also important to remember that any highchair which features an upholstered seat unit or removable upholstery that is supplied with the highchair will be subject to the UK Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended).

The tests themselves are the same as those for domestic furniture in relation to ignition resistance of cover fabrics and fillings as well as any interliners which may be included in the construction.

Standards

Originally covered by British Standard BS5799: 1986 a new 2 part European Standard BSEN 14988-1: 2006 Safety Requirements and BSEN 14988-2:2006 Test Methods was published, causing a stir by applying not only to highchairs used in the home (domestic) but also to those highchairs used in a contract setting such as restaurants, hotels etc.

Although the European standard was revised in 2012 (BSEN 14988-1: 2006 +A1: 2012), a full revision was undertaken which resulted in the recent publication (July 2017) of the new BS EN 14988: 2017.

The first thing one may notice is that the standard is once again a single document, but the changes are far more significant than this.

What's covered?

The standard BSEN 14988: 2017 applies to all free standing children's highchairs, whether intended for domestic or non-domestic use, which will elevate children to table height to enable feeding or eating.

It adds that a child's highchair is intended for children up to 3 years old who are capable of sitting unaided, a slight change in wording intended to reflect the development of an infant as opposed to a minimum age.

The standard does not apply to highchairs designed or intended specifically for medical use.

In addition, where a highchair is designed to convert into another item, for example a swing or a low chair, further testing will be required.

What's new?

There has been a raft of changes to the 2017 edition of BSEN 14988 both to take into account advancements in product design and technology as well as bringing the standard in line with similar standards and best practice within the childcare sector.

Changes in format of the document include:

EN 14988-1 Requirements and EN 14988-2 Test Methods have been merged into one single document meaning test methods now immediately follow requirements;

Change in approach and full re-write of the standard into the preferred hazard based format which enables ease of use and clarity on what hazards are being addressed and how:

With changes in content as follows:

- A series of new definitions for restraint systems, operating devices and parking devices in relation to castors and wheels which are now re-introduced;
- Updated common requirements and test methods to mirror the latest adopted in other childcare product standards;
- New test equipment including finger and head probes, gauges to assess if a part can be gripped and seat impactor.
- Fully updated heavy metals requirements referencing the latest edition of EN 71 Part 3 and 19 heavy metal elements;
- New additional requirements for height adjustable highchairs to address hazards from operation;
- Additional dynamic strength test in the form of seat impacts which mirrors the American ASTM standard for highchairs;
- Inclusion of specific requirements for highchairs that are fitted with 2 or more castors or wheels;
- Amendments to restraint system requirements to include a passive crotch restraint for products with a horizontal component or bar in front of the child;
- A new head probe test method to address "submarining";
- A new mass and test method for more repeatable measurement of backrest angle & recline;
- Additional information to be added to product labels (address of manufacturer / importer);

- Further warning statements and informative statements for instruction leaflets;
- Information added to purchase information to highlight point of sale;
- Detailed rationales in an informative Annex to explain the hazards addressed;
- National A-Deviation in relation to thermal hazards (flammability) to confirm the legal requirement to comply with the UK Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations in addition to requirements in the standard;
- Official translations of warning and hazard statements confirmed by each member state themselves.

Did you know?

Children's highchairs have been in use for at least 300 years, with some models from the mid 1700's selling for thousands of pounds.

Typically produced in the style that was fashionable at the time such as the Windsor and Captain's or Bow, the perfectly scaled down seats were mounted on taller legs and often featured a single removable spindle inserted through the ends of the arms presumably to prevent falls. Given the fact that these were removable and quite a distance in front of the child, we couldn't say how successful they were.

A spate of innovation during the 19th century produced convertible highchairs, including those used as pushchairs and early versions of the now familiar combination chair and table.

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