Hospitality lighting *levels* by space: what the standards actually say

Which document covers which hospitality space, the few lux figures openly published, how uniformity is measured, and wording that leaves the targets to the lighting designer.

Compliance guidance. Figures and quotations are from the editions named, read on 5 November 2026. The documents that set recommended illuminance for hotel and restaurant spaces are paywalled and were not read, so no such figure is given. Emergency, stair and accessibility lighting have their own requirements: check the current editions and your building control body or fire risk assessor. This is guidance, not legal or lighting-design advice.

AT A GLANCE

Space or activity	What governs it	Figure openly published	Status
Back-of-house work: corridors, kitchens, offices	HSE HSG38; BS EN 12464-1 (paywalled)	Corridors 20 lx average, 5 lx minimum; kitchens 100 and 50; offices 200 and 100 (HSG38, page 28)	Published. Workplace guidance from 1997. The EN 12464-1 schedule was not read
Reception desk (staff task); restaurants, bars and lounges (guest areas)	BS EN 12464-1 for staff tasks; the lighting designer, SLL LG18 and the brand standard for guest areas (all paywalled)	None openly published	Not read: the schedule, LG18, brand standards
Guestrooms and bathrooms	Brand standard. SLL LG9 says it does not cover hotels	None openly published	No UK guide for hotels found
Stairs and escape routes	SLL LG16, BS 5266-1 and BS EN 1838 (all paywalled)	None read	LG16 says its levels are based on EN 12464-1. Emergency lighting is the emergency designer's
Visual contrast for accessibility	Approved Document M Vol 2, para 0.26 (England)	Light reflectance value difference of 30 points, or 20 points where illuminance is above 200 lx	Published. A contrast rule, not a design level
Energy (England)	Approved Document L Vol 2: 2021 para 6.59; 2026 para 5.64	Levels appropriate to the activity, not over-illuminated, designed to SLL guidance or equivalent	Principle only. No lux recommendation

lx is lux. Figures are quoted only where read in the document named on 5 Nov 2026. "None read" means the governing document is paywalled and was not read.

UNIFORMITY IN ONE LINE

Illuminance uniformity is the minimum illuminance divided by the average illuminance on a surface, with no unit (CIE S 017:2020, e-ILV 17-29-160). Example with twelve invented readings: average 135 lx, minimum 109 lx, uniformity 0.81. A uniformity figure needs its plane, its height, the area measured, the scene and dimming level, and whether it is maintained or initial. In a restaurant or bar it is normally set on the task areas, not the whole floor.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

DESIGN TARGETS

Lighting designer to issue a target table by space and scene before the layout is fixed. For each row: maintained average illuminance [ ] lx, not less than [ ] lx at any measuring point, on the [horizontal plane at [ ] mm above finished floor / table tops / bar top], uniformity (minimum divided by average) not less than [ ] over [the task areas]. Name the source of each target ([BS EN 12464-1 edition / SLL guide / brand standard]). Supplier web pages are not accepted as a source.

SCENES AND TRANSITIONS

Targets apply at the named scene [lunch / evening / late] at [ ] per cent dimming. Illuminance ratio between [the arrival area] and [the restaurant] not more than [ ] to 1, with a transition zone of [ ] m. Maker to supply photometric data for decorative fittings, or the effect is confirmed by measurement.

ESCAPE AND STAIR LIGHTING

Emergency escape and stair lighting to [BS 5266-1 / BS EN 1838] and [SLL LG16] as applicable, by [the emergency lighting designer]. No scene or dimming setting is to reduce lighting on stairs or escape routes below the design level of [ ] lx.

VERIFICATION AT COMMISSIONING

Illuminance measured with a calibrated meter ([class], certificate dated within [ ] months) at the grid on drawing [ ], in each named scene, after the lamps have stabilised. Readings recorded and signed by [name] and compared with the target table; any point below target is corrected and remeasured before handover.

TERMS USED

Illuminance (lux)

How much light falls on a surface: lumens per square metre. It is the unit lighting-level recommendations are written in (HSE HSG38 glossary; Approved Document M Volume 2).

Average and minimum measured illuminance

In HSE HSG38, the average illuminance over a work area and the lowest illuminance recommended at any position in it, so that dark spots are not hidden by an average.

Illuminance uniformity (Uo)

The minimum illuminance divided by the average illuminance on a surface. It has no unit (CIE S 017:2020, e-ILV 17-29-160).

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- BS EN 12464-1:2021 (BSI, 31 Aug 2021) and the SLL (CIBSE) Code for Lighting, Lighting Handbook, LG9, LG16 and LG18: BSI listing and CIBSE portal pages read 5 Nov 2026; paywalled, not read. Confirm against the current editions.
- HSE HSG38 (1997) and L24 (2013); Approved Documents M Vol 2 and L Vol 2 (England): HSG38 pages 28 to 30; L24 regulation 8; ADM 0.26 and 4.34; ADL 2021 6.59, 2026 5.64 and Table B1; all read 5 Nov 2026.
- CIE S 017:2020 International Lighting Vocabulary (e-ILV): entry 17-29-160, read 5 Nov 2026. BS 5266-1 and BS EN 1838 (emergency lighting) are named, not read.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/lighting-levels-by-space. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.