

# The Toilet Paper



## Inclusive Design of Public Toilets

Welcome to the fourth and final edition of our research newsletter The Toilet Paper. The Inclusive Design of Away From Home (Public) Toilets in City Centres project officially ended in September 2006. Since then, the research team has been analyzing the data they collected from nearly 550 participants, and drawing it together to produce a resource for designers, architects, providers and communities who are

keen to provide accessible toilets that cater to everyone's needs.

This issue of the Toilet Paper will highlight some of the main findings of the accessible toilets research.

The project was one of several that were part of the Vivacity 2020 research consortium, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the UK Governments largest

funding body for research on the built environment. The consortium's focus was to look at the issue of urban sustainability in the built environment, of which the provision of 'away from home' toilets was considered an important aspect. Vivacity is now in its final stages and will be reporting its findings in 2008. If you would like to know more about Vivacity and it's research please see the consortium's website (details on back page).

## Personas

A central aspect of the research was the development of personas as tools for architects, designers and toilet providers to assess how current and future away from home toilet provision may be improved to cater for everyone's needs.

The personas were designed from detailed interviews conducted by telephone, in person and through focus groups. In total nearly 250 people contributed to the 42 personas we developed. Further information regarding users' experiences with lavatories, was provided by

people who wrote letters and e-mailed us.

From this information we were able to show that certain design aspects of away from home toilets were of greater concern. These included non-slip flooring, larger cubicles, lighting and the provision of a shelf. Management and planning concerns were also highlighted including ensuring the bin was not placed in the transfer space and the provision of more public toilets

The personas aim to represent a range of ages, abilities, faith and gender concerns regarding toilet

facilities. We have also included the needs of those requiring space for adult changing, families and those who require assistance from a carer as well as the carer's needs, as well as the concerns of young people when using away from home toilets, and those whose disability maybe hidden.



## Case Studies



Toilets illuminated by blue lights deter substance use, but make facilities inaccessible for many people with a range of disabilities

Initially the research planned to do four case studies of city centre toilet provision. However, as the project progressed and the range of issues became apparent we were able to extend our case study examples to nine. Case studies were drawn from the central themes we encountered. The study of Clerkenwell in London examined the issues facing an area where no public toilets are provided. Our Westminster study looked

at the issues facing a provider of 24 hour provision. In Manchester we focused on the provision provided in civic buildings and transport terminals in addition to public toilets, and in Sheffield we recorded the tensions between public and private provision. Our extra case studies took place in the London borough of Richmond where we looked at the details of the local authority's acclaimed Community Toilet

Scheme. At Milton Keynes MK Centre we detailed the UK's first and oldest public adult changing facility. In Cambridge we looked at the provision of new facilities specifically designed to fit into the city centre. Our final two case studies looked at people's campaigns to have toilets built, one a group campaign based in Nottingham and the other a single person's campaign based in Liverpool, both of which saw the building of new public toilet facilities

## The Toilet Audit Tool

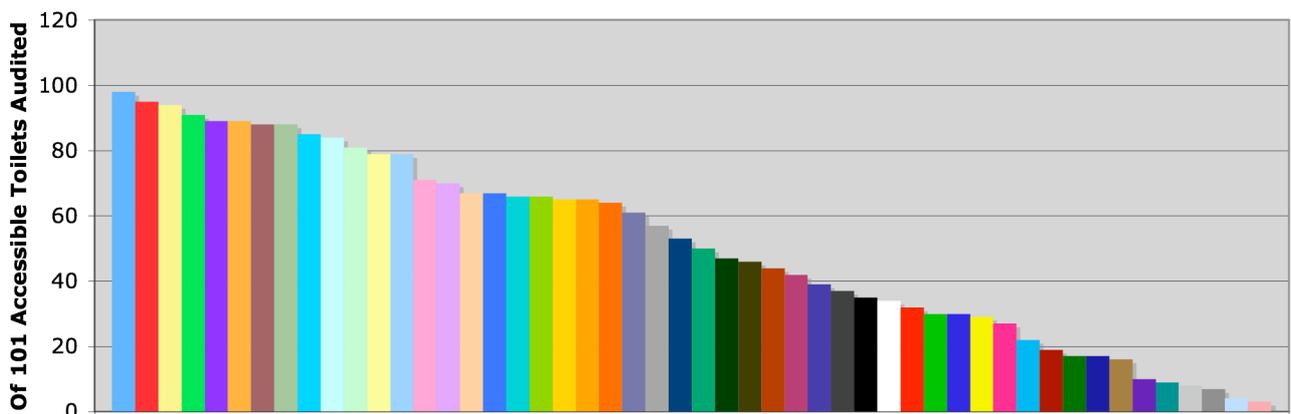
The research team and access auditor Vin Goodwin developed a 'tool' to audit accessible away from home toilet facilities. The tool follows design guidance laid out in 2004's Building Regulations Approved Document M (Part M) and records 50 different points of design, layout and fittings guidelines that should be found in

accessible (disabled) toilets. In total we audited 101 accessible toilets around England. The graph below (reading details from left to right) shows which design features were absent from the toilets we studied. The most common missing feature was the colostomy shelf. This may be due to providers' reluctance to

include flat surfaces to deter illegal substance use in toilets. Such exclusion reflects design choices where the needs of many are overshadowed by the behavior of a few. Equally the lack of sanitary dispensers in accessible toilets highlights an inequality of provision for women

with disabilities. Of the grab rails (GR) those affixed to the door (GR A) and the drop down rail (GR C) were most often found to be either missing or placed at the wrong height. The fixture most commonly found in the accessible loo was the lever tap. Yet, this was often noted to have been installed on the wrong side of the basin.

All Dimensions, Fixtures & Fittings



Does Not Conform to Part M

- |                        |                      |                        |                        |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Colostomy Shelf        | GR A 680mm           | Sanitary Dispenser     | General Shelf          |
| Hgt Wall Mirror        | Paper Towels         | Coat Hook              | GR F 800mm             |
| GR D 680mm             | WC - Basin 140-160mm | TP sheet dispenser     | Hgt Basin Mirror       |
| Pad / Nappy Bin        | Reset button WC      | Clear trans space      | Soap facilities        |
| WC Pan Height 480mm    | GR C 680mm           | Drop down WC 320mm     | WC Pan back wall 750mm |
| Depth 2200mm           | GR B 800mm           | GR E 800mm             | Cord to floor          |
| WC Pan side wall 500mm | Internal Contrast    | Waste Bin              | Sanitary Bin           |
| Hot air dryer          | Transfer Flush       | Basin Height 720-740mm | Backrest/cistern       |
| Signage                | Drop down sturdy     | Lighting               | Width 1500mm           |
| Lever Lock             | Near M / F           | Baby Change-Yes        | GR Lengths 600mm       |
| Alarm System           | WC Door              | Access Route           | Outward door           |
| Door 800mm             | Route Doors          | Left/Right Transfer    | Storage Use-Yes        |
| GR Sturdy              | Lever / Auto tap     |                        |                        |

## Surveys

We conducted street surveys in London, Manchester and Sheffield. In total 211 people (87 men, 124 women) aged between 16 and over 65 agreed to answer our queries concerning their local public toilet provision. We found that just under 60% of people knew where their nearest public toilet is. Yet, only 33% would use it. Nearly 82% of people said they preferred to use private provision. Yet 83% would like to see more public toilets provided and 63% would be willing to pay for well maintained facilities. Almost 73% of those questioned felt that there was inadequate provision within the city centre during the evening and

52% felt that there was a problem with street urination.

In addition to our street surveys we were also passed detailed survey results from the charity and campaign group ITAAL (Is There An Accessible Loo). Their survey of members, particularly those who were disabled or cared for someone who was showed that when away from home 48% relied on the toilets provided by supermarkets. 96% of respondents under 35 could not use facilities that did not include an adult changing table or hoist and 92% responded that the lack of adequate toilet facilities prevented them from going out 'very much'

Only 9% reported that they knew of facilities with provision for adult changing.

37% of respondents didn't have or had never heard of the RADAR key scheme, and 44% reported that venue opening times prevented them accessing RADAR locked toilets. 6% of those surveyed reported being unable to use accessible toilets when needed due to their use by 'able-bodied' people. Yet 13% of those with hidden disabilities reported being challenged when using the accessible toilet. Our thanks to ITAAL and it's members for allowing us to analyze and use this information.



Nearly 60% of those we surveyed reported that they would not use an Automatic Public Convenience



89% of ITAAL respondents under 35 cannot use the current standard for accessible toilets due to lack of space

## The Accessible Toilet Design Resource

We have collated all of the information gathered during the course of the project into a design resource for designers, architects and managers of away from home toilets. However, the resource also provides important information for communities who may be interested in improving the design of away from home toilets within their area.

The resource includes detailed information on our findings, tools with which users and providers can audit toilet facilities, information on how to produce personas to communicate needs as well as the 42 personas developed by the

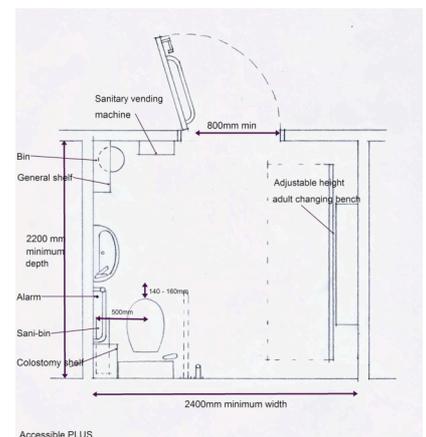
research.

In addition, the resource provides design templates by architect and access advisor Vin Goodwin for suitable designs to suit everyone's needs. Currently, toilet design follows a 'one size fits all' philosophy. However, our research has shown that with the range of abilities, ages and cultural considerations (family and faith aspects) represented in modern society, several different designs are required to meet the needs of the wider population.

The key findings of the research are also detailed in the resource. These include; nearly half of the people we surveyed

(48%) found that the accessible cubicle lacked adequate turning space for their wheelchair, 30% of users found that grab rails were difficult to use and 94% of cubicles we audited had the incorrect configuration of grab rails.

The resource is available as a CD, and will also be available as a web resource through Vivacity. If you would like to receive a copy of the guide, please send your details to Professor Julienne Hanson (address and Vivacity web details on back page).



The Accessible Plus Design template, developed by the research to include basic adult changing provision.

## Inclusive Design of Away From Home 'Public' Toilets in City Centres

Professor Julienne  
Hanson  
Bartlett School of  
Graduate Studies  
UCL, (Torrington  
Place Site), Gower  
Street, London.  
WC1E 6BT

PHONE:  
020 7679 1740

FAX:  
020 7916 1887

E-MAIL:  
[j.hanson@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:j.hanson@ucl.ac.uk)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

[http://www.vivacity  
2020.eu/](http://www.vivacity2020.eu/)



## Thank You

The research team would like to thank all of the 248 people who contributed their time and experiences to the research by participating in focus groups and interviews. There was so much information we do hope we captured the most important elements in our personas.

We should also like to thank the charities, community organisations and support groups who helped us find our research participants and updated us with

valuable information concerning toilet issues (or t-issues as we came to call them).

Thanks to the research steering committee including ITAAL (is There an Accessible Loo), The Centre for Accessible Environments, The city councils of Westminster, Manchester and Sheffield, the sanitary manufacturers Sissons & Ideal Standard, The British Institute of Cleaning Science, Colin Cockfield (Police Architect) and The British

Toilet Association.

Finally, thanks to our colleagues on Vivacity and at our respective departments for putting up with our never ending 'interesting facts' about toilets.



Jo-Anne auditing accessible toilets.

## What the researchers did next

Between September 2003 and August 2006 the research collected nearly 400 hours of interviews about toilets, took nearly 1000 photos of provision, visited loos in Europe, the US and Japan, and collected over 5000 toilet design details

Since then, Professor Julienne Hanson continues to work at the Bartlett focusing on housing and built environment design for

older and disabled people.

Professor Clara Greed continues her research on planning issues, with special attention to toilets, at the University of the West of England

Jo-Anne Bichard secured a new post at the Royal College of Art Helen Hamlyn Centre where she is extending her research on inclusive design to include products and

environments. Her work on toilets continues with her PhD, and she would be happy to hear from anyone who would like to continue to participate in further accessible toilet research or who has an interest in inclusive design. She can be reached through e-mail: [jo-anne.bichard@rca.ac.uk](mailto:jo-anne.bichard@rca.ac.uk) or by writing to the Helen Hamlyn Centre, Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2EU



The Bartlett School of Architecture, Building, Environmental Design and Planning.  
Faculty of the Built Environment  
University College London



University of Salford  
A Greater Manchester University



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

