

# The Toilet Paper

VivaCity2020



EPSRC

## Inclusive Design of Public Toilets

Welcome to the second edition of our research newsletter. The Inclusive Design of Away From Home (Public) Toilets in City Centres project has continued to work with support and community groups to gather data that expresses the concerns users have about public toilets. From these collaborations we have developed personas that articulate a range of users' needs. We have also developed design

templates to show how public toilets can be modified and improved for all users, or be completely re-designed.

The case study of Clerkenwell is now complete and we are now preparing for our next study of Sheffield's city centre.

The project is pleased to announce that it has been awarded funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Global Opportunities Fund. Jo-

Anne will be traveling to Japan in the New Year to see the work done by Japanese researchers in public toilet design.

Furthering our contact with Japanese research Julienne was recently invited to Tokyo to speak at the Japanese Toilet Association's AGM, and Clara was invited to China to speak at the World Toilet Summit held in Beijing.

## The Disability Discrimination Act

One of the most important issues in our research has been the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The legislation, which came into force on October 1<sup>st</sup>, requires service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical features of their premises to overcome the barriers to access that many disabled people face.

In regards to the public toilet, the DDA will cover all aspects of the provision from the design and construction, the entry and exit, fixtures, fittings and

furnishings. Every aspect of the public toilet will be covered and will need re-evaluation in terms of design and access.

The Act does not just apply to people who use wheelchairs, but covers everybody with a visible and hidden disability. Consequently the research is looking at the inclusive design of all toilet facilities, not just those specifically allocated for disabled people. This will ensure that disabled people, older people, families with

young children and faith and minority ethnic communities will have equal access to suitable public toilets.





Many accessible toilets have poor fittings and fixtures.

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*“We offer £15 to each participant for a 90 minute meeting “*

## Fixtures and Fittings

An article about this research in ‘*Tidings*’, the newsletter of the British Colostomy Society, prompted numerous responses concerning the lack of coat hooks in both standard and accessible toilets. For these users, having a coat hook and a clean, suitably sized shelf enables them to use toilets with more ease and dignity.

The research continues to see many facilities that

have major design and management concerns. Flush handles are often not of the recommended ‘paddle’ design and not fitted on the transfer side of the toilet. Alarm cords are often tied up or in some cases have been ‘cut’ to half their length.

The need for a timer device, as reported in our last issue, has highlighted a major tension between users and providers. Providers raised concerns

regarding possible anti-social uses of the timer and toilet. Suggestions were proposed for a less technological solution i.e. a sign on the door. The issue of the timer (along with ‘blue lights’) illustrates the design dilemma between ‘access’ or ‘fortress’. Unfortunately the fortress approach is often the direction taken, making the toilet ‘user unfriendly’ to the majority, due to the behaviour of a small minority.

## Focus Groups and Personas

The research recently polled its advisory group to suggest priority user groups to approach with regards to future collaborations for persona development. Much to the research’s surprise the results showed that there is still a perceived need to investigate the design requirements of able as well as disabled users. In particular the needs of children and families were highlighted.

We have identified five generic principles for users to consider when thinking about toilets. These are safety, privacy, cleanliness, comfort and dignity. We ask focus groups to consider if toilets are safe and if they provide adequate privacy? Are the facilities clean and comfortable to use? Finally, can the toilet be used with dignity?

The research is keen to hear from all users about

their experiences of away from home (public) toilet facilities. We ask support and community groups to contact us regarding paid focus groups (we offer £15 to each participant for a 90 minute meeting). Individuals can also contact us for one-to one paid interviews (£10 for a one hour chat). For more details on how to be involved please contact Jo-Anne (contact details on back page).



An accessible toilet in Beijing

## World Toilet Summit – Beijing, China

Clara was invited to give a key note speech at the World Toilet Summit in Beijing China which was attended by over 550 toilet experts from all over the world. The Chinese Ministry of Tourism sponsored the event, and government ministers addressed the conference stressing the importance

of public toilet provision. Currently there are 100,000 toilets in Beijing, with more being built. Toilets are distributed every 300 meters along roads, and are graded on a 1-5 star system with the best facilities for tourists and located around Tieneman Square and the Forbidden City. Beijing

itself has taken a ‘great leap forward’ in respect of a massive toilet revolution and Clara found it very impressive, with more then equal provision for women, good washing facilities and many attendants, the latter being the secret to preventing anti-social behavior in public toilets.

## Japanese Toilet Association AGM – Tokyo, Japan

It was with some trepidation that Julienne flew off to Tokyo in early November, to attend the 20<sup>th</sup> Japanese Symposium on Toilets, at which she had been asked to give a keynote address on inclusive design. On arrival Julienne's first point of call was a formal dinner where she was astonished to find she was the guest of honour. As well as sampling Japanese hospitality and cuisine, the dinner provided opportunities to discover what research was taking place into toilet design and service delivery.

The next morning, Julienne arrived at the headquarters of TOTO

Ltd., Japan's leading sanitary ware manufacturer. To an audience of 80 delegates that included experts in accessibility, representatives of Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, members of the Japanese Toilet Association and fellow Professors from Meiji University, Julienne presented her talk on her current research and explored the possibilities of future collaborative research in the area of public toilets, between Japan and the UK.

After the meeting, Julienne was taken to TOTO's research laboratory where

she was able to explore their 'access lab', a mock up full-scale toilet cubicle with movable walls, and fixtures and fittings that can be adjusted to suit each individual user's requirements. Julienne has now returned home inspired by the eagerness of the Japanese to engage in serious research in toilet design, and plans to build a similar access lab to TOTO's in the UK, so that we can carry out essential ergonomic studies with different user groups in order to improve the design of the 'accessible loo of the future'.



An accessible TOTO toilet in Japan.

## Pilot Case Study: Clerkenwell

Despite having a lively bar and club scene, a large population of residents and frequent visitors to the area's historic sites, the Clerkenwell area of London has no public toilet facilities. This has shifted the onus of provision from the local authority (public) sector onto the private sector of bars, pubs, cafés and restaurants. However, as our case study of the area found, this shift to private provision causes problems when everything closes. In addition, many of the toilets provided by the 'private' sector were

poorly designed in terms of access, and many of the accessible toilets we viewed could not be considered to meet the design guidelines laid out in the British Standards (BS8300) or the new ADM.

Some providers did feel that their accessible toilets were suitable, yet they had no clear understanding of how certain fixtures such as support rails were used and the difficulty that could be caused when fixtures were poorly fitted.

Many providers insisted their toilets were 'for customers only', requiring a purchase in order to use the toilet.

Surveys distributed to people in the area found that 74% considered toilet provision inadequate in the evenings, and 84% felt there should be more public toilets available. Over half said they would be willing to pay for better facilities.

Having completed our Clerkenwell study we are set to begin our next case study of Sheffield city centre in the New Year.

*"I hate sneaking in or having to ask just to use the toilet."*



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

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[www.vivacity2020.org](http://www.vivacity2020.org)



## Favourite Toilet

Do you have a favourite toilet? Is it well designed, has it a high standard of cleanliness and can it be used with safety, privacy, comfort and dignity. The research sees many examples of 'bad' practice but would like to hear from readers about the 'good' practice that is out there. Please contact us with

details of why your favorite toilet is a joy to use. If it is possible please take a photograph.

Examples we know about include the facilities at Milton Keynes Shopping Centre. These toilets are well favoured with many users and are one of the few facilities in the country that offer an adult

changing bench. This important fixture together with superb baby changing provision highlights what can be achieved with inclusive toilet design and provision. Please send recommendations and photos to Jo-Anne at the contact details on this page.

## Toilet News

From news stories we receive, we've calculated that at least 30 toilets around the UK have closed, or been designated for closure, since October 1<sup>st</sup>. Many of the closures are due to vandalism and possibly a result of the Crime Partnership Bill which requires local authorities to 'act' when crime is committed on their property. In addition,

some councils are creating partnerships with private providers to allow members of the public to use their toilet facilities. However the lack of signage and knowledge about which toilets are open to the public means that residents and visitors alike have to be 'clairvoyant' to find the toilet.

Coat hooks (see fixtures and fittings) were also a

major concern for one user at the new Scottish parliament who found the hooks on the ladies' toilet door too high to reach.

Nottingham City Council recently invited people to 'test drive' a fully accessible toilet design they are developing. This design would include more space, an adult changing bench and a hoist, to meet the needs of visitors and their carers to the Nottingham area.

## About Vivacity 2020

Vivacity 2020 is a university based research consortium comprising of the University of Salford, UCL, Sheffield Hallam University, London Metropolitan University

and the University of the West of England. The research project has been funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and is looking at

a range of aspects to city centre living including housing, crime and the environment, as well as day to day aspects such as adequate public toilet facilities.



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