

Top tips to Making toilets more accessible

The availability of good quality, free toilet facilities can help people feel more confident when they go out.

Here are some simple, low cost ways to help people with different needs and their carers.

- A "not all disabilities visible" sign can help prevent people with disabilities such as a stoma or autism, from feeling uncomfortable using accessible toilets. Disability groups can provide training for your staff.
- Easy-to-use door handles and locks are particularly important for people who have problems with their hands. Sliding doors may be better for independent wheelchair users.
- A shelf above the toilet is really useful for people who have a stoma. Clean facilities are vital for people with a stoma to feel confident using public toilets.
- Bright lights, ideally on a long-timer or with an easy to find switch, help to prevent people becoming disorientated or frightened.
- 'Light, easy to open doors are important for wheelchair users, as well as many older people and others with conditions such as arthritis.'
- Even flooring helps people with sight and mobility problems.
- Clear colour contrasts between toilets, floors and doors help people.

- Keeping toilets clean and clutter free is especially important for people with visual impairments.
- Signs are really important for people with dementia or learning difficulties. Good signs showing how to get into and out of the toilets help people to avoid getting lost or confused. Avoid signs with gimmicks that may be confusing.
- A hook on the door at wheelchair level is really useful for independent wheelchair users.
- Many people find it difficult to use toilets with very limited space. Outward opening doors can increase the space available making it easier for people with mobility problems and those needing support from a carer.

Not every disability is visible

Javeria's story

Javeria became partially sighted after having a stroke two years ago. Javeria lost confidence as a result and rarely went out. She became increasingly isolated and depressed. With the help of a support worker, Javeria gradually began to regain her confidence and started taking small trips out to the shops. To begin with, this was very difficult, and Javeria felt too nervous to use public toilets on her own. But one local café has big clear signs, and good lighting inside, and on the way to the toilet. This really helped Javeria and she is now able to make her way there and back on her own.

Community toilet schemes

Do you already let people use your loo? Could your toilet become part of a community toilet scheme? Organisations of any size, whether public, community or commercial, agree to make their toilets available by allowing members of the public to use their

toilet facilities without obligation to purchase products or services. Signs in the window indicate they are part of the scheme.

Community toilet schemes can be a great way of increasing the number of toilets available locally. For those people who need to use the toilet more often, or more urgently, knowing they can use a toilet without having to ask, can make a real difference, by reducing anxiety.

Check with your local authority if a community toilet scheme is running, if not encourage them to do so.

Changing places toilets accessible for all

Standard accessible toilets cannot meet the needs of everyone with a disability. Changing places toilets are designed, by their size and the equipment in them, to cater for the needs of people with more complex needs.

The changing places website provides information about how to build these facilities (<http://www.changing-places.org>). If people responsible for new developments, large public buildings and planners consider providing changing places toilets it will make a huge difference to people's lives.

Dan and Sarah's story

Sarah looks after her son Dan who has autism. He is 20 and likes to be independent but going to the toilet when they are away from home can cause problems for both Dan and Sarah. Dan is disturbed by the noise of automated hand driers. Having an alternative to a hand drier such as paper towels makes a real difference to him. Dan does not like to use accessible toilets with a sign depicting a wheelchair on as he does not use one – alternative or additional signage would be useful, such as a “not all disabilities are visible” sign. Sarah has to wait outside while Dan uses the toilet as she worries he is vulnerable. A large accessible or family toilet cubicle works best, because Dan can have privacy but she can still be around to offer support.

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