

# The Toilet Paper

VivaCity2020



EPSRC

## Inclusive Design of Public Toilets

Welcome to the third edition of our research newsletter. The Inclusive Design of Away From Home (Public) Toilets in City Centres research project has continued to work with support and community groups in gathering data that expresses the concerns people have about toilet facilities on offer when away from home. In this edition we report on our case study of toilet provision in Sheffield. In addition, the research also

revisited the pilot study area of Clerkenwell to assess developments in accessible toilets since the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act.

We have now spoken to nearly 200 people regarding concerns they have about the design and management of away from home toilets and the information gathered from these discussions is continuing to inform the development of personas. We are aiming to have

around 40 personas finished by the end of February 2006.

The team has also been busy informing architects, designers and providers about the issues surrounding toilet facilities. Julienne has been asked to assess a design competition for toilet facilities in the Mersey basin, Clara spoke at the recent World Toilet Summit in Belfast and Jo-Anne presented the research at a conference in Las Vegas.

## Focus Groups and Personas

The research is now in the final stages of it's user consultation through focus groups and interviews. We have spoken to nearly 200 people and are currently putting everything we have been told into the variety of personas we are developing. We aim to have all of the personas finished by the end of February, copies of which will be sent to all who participated for you to comment on. The research has had a good response to some of the personas already in circulation amongst design professionals. They have also been passed on to a number of community

groups to aid in communicating toileting needs to local authorities in the face of public toilet closures.

In addition the research has many surveys currently being analysed. This information will complement the personas by setting the percentages of users against specific fixtures and fittings, thus quantifying which fittings people rely on the most.

The research has also been forwarded surveys carried out by ITAAL (Is There An Accessible Loo) which include detailed information on accessible

toilets from around the UK. Results from these surveys will be published in the next edition of The Toilet Paper.

The research is also planning to develop the collected data into a resource pack for local communities to use. This will be available at the end of the project later in 2006.



## The DDA and Clerkenwell Case Study



Many providers continue to use their accessible toilets as 'storage'.

As many of you involved in the research are aware, the introduction of the disability Discrimination Act in October 2004 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 the case of toilet provision this means that where standard toilet facilities are provided, there should also be accessible facilities as

well. Before the Act was introduced we visited the Clerkenwell area of London and assessed how many premises provided accessible facilities. We found that of premises we visited just over half (37) had accessible toilets. In these the research found many had design and layout flaws as well as including non-accessible fittings and fixtures. Following the development of our toilet audit tool, we revisited Clerkenwell a year later

and found many more accessible toilets. However the design, layout and choice of fittings in many of these facilities still hadn't followed guidance recommendations.

In total we visited 70 premises including 1 public toilet and of the 50 points in design and layout guidance, the highest we found was 31. The lowest was 9 which means the design of the accessible toilet had only followed 9 of the guidance recommendations for layout fixtures and fittings.

## The Toilet Audit Tool

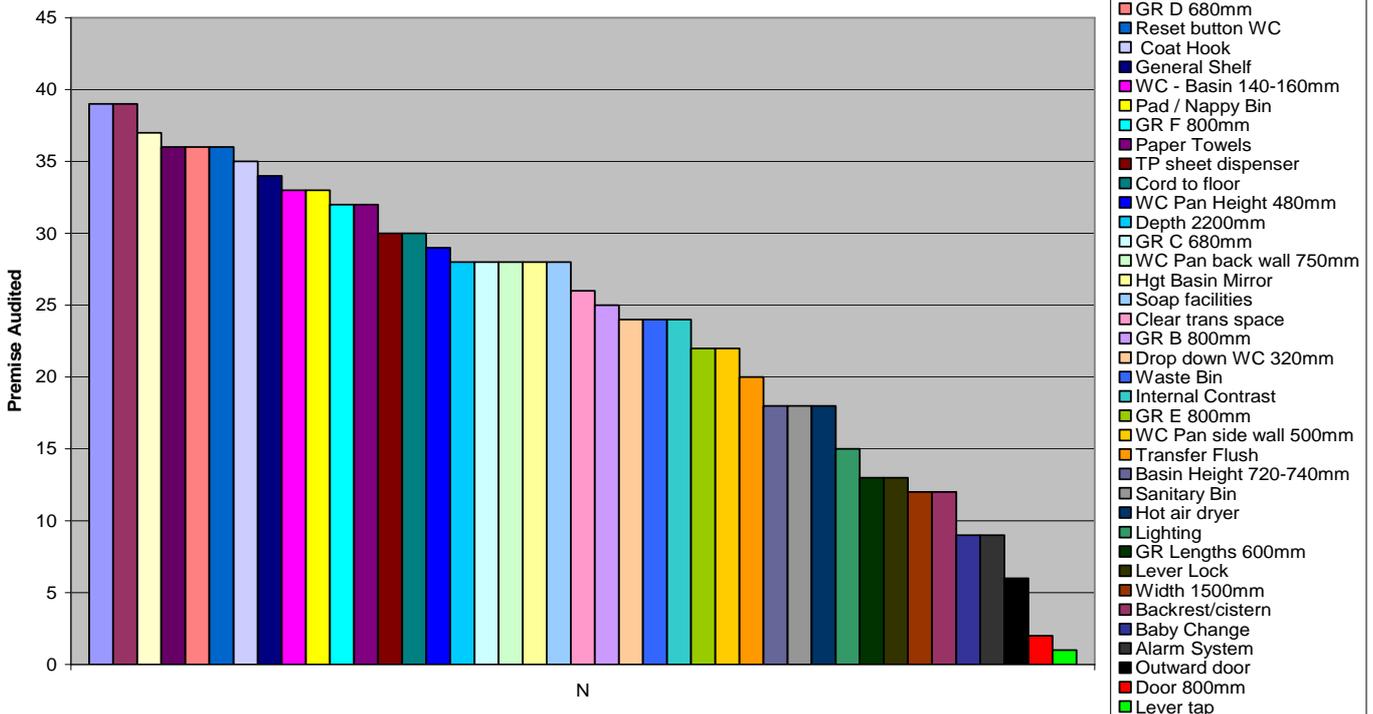
The research has collaborated with access auditor Vin Goodwin in developing a 'tool' to audit all away from home toilet facilities. The tool follows design recommendations laid out in the British Standard BS8300 and the more recent Building Regulations Approved

Document M and records 50 different points of design, layout and fitting recommendations. We have so far audited 40 toilet facilities with this tool and have been able to assess the features which follow the guidelines, as well as the features least found in

away from home toilets. The graph below shows which design features were most absent from the accessible toilets we audited. Most of the facilities did not have a shelf or supplementary basin. Of the grab rails (GR) those affixed to the door and wall beside the

WC pan were the most common items to be found either missing or placed at the wrong height. The fixture most commonly found within the facility was the lever tap, however, this was often found not to have been installed correctly.

Design Features That Fail to Conform to BS8300



## HCI, Las Vegas, USA

Jo-Anne was asked to present a paper at the Human Computer Interaction conference held in Las Vegas. The paper focused on the design aspects of away from home toilets, especially for people with cognitive disabilities. Visiting Las Vegas also gave Jo-Anne the opportunity to assess toilet provision in what is considered one of the most accessible cities in the USA. Jo-Anne found that many of the accessible toilets were not unisex but located in the male and female facilities.

Many of the toilets had slatted doors and very high door and partition levels. This provided very little privacy to people

using all of the toilet cubicles including the accessible one. Although the toilets were spacious and of the highest standard of cleanliness (and tastefully decorated), they contained a minimum of fixtures and fittings that would assist the user.

Interestingly many of the standard cubicles (in the ladies) included a drop down shelf for handbags, although no shelf was provided in the accessible toilets.

All of the toilets included an automatic flush mechanism, however this would activate if you moved in front of it a few times leading to multiple and possibly unnecessary flushes.

The accessible cubicle did not include hand washing facilities. These were located with other hand basins. The basins were fully enclosed allowing space for wheelchair users to use them. However, the basins were at the same level as a standard one, which may be uncomfortable for many users.

Many casinos offered inclusive gaming tables including hearing loops, large print and level access throughout. However, on speaking to a visitor who was familiar with UK accessible toilets, she rated those found in the UK to be much easier to use.



Las Vegas Toilets are very clean and well decorated but offer the minimum in assistive fixtures and fittings.



Basins had open spaces underneath but were at the same height as standard ones.

## Case Study: Sheffield

During the Summer of 2005 the research carried out it's case study of accessible toilet provision in Sheffield city centre.

We visited 31 providers of which 10 did not offer accessible facilities. Of the 21 that did, we were given permission to audit 17 toilets.

We found quite a high standard of toilet design within those audited. On sight, many had adequate space, and the recommended basic fixtures and fittings. A large proportion had included backrests as standard.

Yet on closer inspection with the audit tool, many of the facilities failed in

the finer details of access. Alarm cords were tied up or too short, flush handles were on the wrong side, sanitary bins were in the transfer space or there was no bin provision of any kind.

Only 4 of the facilities audited had WC bowls of the recommended height, and whilst many had most of the recommended grab rails many of these were not at the heights laid out in design guidance.

We also spoke with toilet attendants, private providers and members of the public regarding the issues they face as providers and users of toilet facilities.

One of the main issues

identified by all was the lack of signage directing people to toilets. This was echoed by visitors to Sheffield city centre who mentioned that they would often go back to either their hotel or home to use toilets.

Along with other VivaCity researchers we conducted an evening walkabout where we witnessed many instances of street urination due to the lack of evening provision. In addition we noted that the issue is most acute for those under 18 who can not access toilets in bars or pubs when public and department store provision closes.



Accessible toilet in Sheffield with dedicated shelf area.



Lack of signage and information to toilets made it appear there were less facilities available.

**Inclusive Design of  
Away From Home  
'Public' Toilets in  
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**World Toilet Summit – Belfast**

In September 2005 Clara attended the World Toilet Conference in Belfast. This was the first time this event, organised by the World Toilet Organisation, had been held in Europe. Around 300 delegates from around the world discussed the myriad of issues relating to 'away from home' provision.

One of the major themes of the conference was the importance of cleaning toilets emphasising that well designed facilities may be shunned if they are not kept to a high

standard of cleanliness.

Delegates included PAMIS whose campaign 'Changing Places' is calling for adult changing benches and hoists within facilities.

Speakers also included representatives from Indonesia who detailed their work in Banda Aceh and the toileting problems experienced in the wake of the Tsunami.

The conference culminated in the presentation of the Loo of the Year awards and to

the handing over of the organisation for the 2006 World Toilet meeting to the Moscow delegation.



Campaigners from Water Aid highlight world toilet issues in Belfast.

**Final Stages**

The research is now in it's final stages. Our next case study will be in Manchester followed by Westminster in London. The case study will comprise further toilet audits with the aim to have audited 100 facilities within the three case study areas.

In addition we will have conducted nearly 300 street surveys on provision, as well as

nearly 200 questionnaires on the design of toilet facilities. In person we have collected in depth interviews and focus group comments from nearly 200 people totalling nearly 300 hours of interviews.

In informing academics, design professionals and other interested parties about the research we have participated in meetings and conferences

throughout the UK, and beyond, to promote the issue of inclusive design within toilet facilities.

The research would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved, the response for participation has been phenomenal.



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