

Title: P-05-927 Changing Places toilet facilities

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Ionawr 2020
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Petition Number: P-05-927

Petition title: Changing Places toilet facilities

Text of petition: This petition urges the Welsh Government to make Immediate Changes to Building and Planning Regulations to ensure that Changing Places toilet facilities, with Adult Changing Bench, Hoist and enough space for 2 Carers, are provided in all Large Public Buildings as they are Built, Redeveloped or Refurbished.

Case example:

"My daughter is 9 and has global development delay and is a wheelchair user. Her disability means she is unable to maintain a sitting balance and she is non-verbal, so, she cannot tell me when she needs the loo. This means she wears nappies. When she needs changing whilst we are away from home, we often struggle to find facilities in which to do so. She is getting too large for a baby changing unit and our only other option is the toilet floor, which is unsanitary, unhygienic and in my mind is inhumane as well as undignified. This is a completely unacceptable and unreasonable situation for anybody to be exposed to. I am also aware that each time I lift her, I am putting myself at risk of an acute back injury and this will become more of a risk as she gets older and bigger. How people manage to change adults this way beggars belief"

There are thousands of disabled people across Wales who need the facilities a Changing Places toilet offers. British Standards 8300/2018 says that Changing Places toilets should be provided in Larger Buildings and Complexes such as

- A. Major Transport Termini or Interchanges e.g. Large Railway Stations and Airports
- B. Motorway Services
- C. Sport and Leisure facilities, including Large Hotels
- D. Cultural Centres, such as Museums, Concert Halls and Art Galleries and Faith Centres



- E. Stadia and Large Auditoria
- F. Large Commercial Retail Premises and Shopping Centres
- G. Key Buildings within Town Centres, e.g., Town halls, Civic Centres and Main Public Libraries
- H. Educational establishments
- I. Health Facilities, such as Hospitals, Health Centres and Community Practices
- J. Other Visitor Attractions, such as Theme Parks, Monitored Beaches and Parks

The Welsh Government can and must do better than the current situation and make Changing Places toilets Compulsory for Large Public Buildings as listed in BS8300/2018

1. Background

1.1. Changing Places toilet facilities

The Changing Places Consortium states that standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability:

People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well [as] people with other physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. These needs are met by Changing Places toilets.

The Changing Places Consortium says that Changing Places toilets provide:

- **The right equipment**
 - a height adjustable adult-sized changing bench; and
 - a tracking hoist system, or mobile hoist if this is not possible.
- **Enough space**
 - adequate space in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers;
 - a centrally placed toilet with room either side; and
 - a screen or curtain to allow some privacy.
- **A safe and clean environment**

- wide tear off paper roll to cover the bench;
- a large waste bin for disposable pads; and
- a non-slip floor.

[Research by the University of Dundee \(PDF, 176KB\)](#) suggests that there are over a quarter of a million people in the UK that do not have access to public toilet facilities that meet their needs and would benefit from Changing Places toilets. The Research Service has been unable to find comparable Wales-specific figures.

1.2. Local authority toilet strategies

The *Public Health (Wales) Act 2017* requires local authorities to prepare a local strategy to plan how they will meet their community's needs for public toilet facilities.

The strategy must include an assessment of the community's need for toilets, including changing facilities for babies and **Changing Places facilities for disabled people**, and must set out how the local authority proposes to meet this need. The duty to prepare a local toilets strategy does not in itself require local authorities directly to provide and maintain public toilets, rather they should consider a "full range of options" for making facilities available to the public.

The Welsh Government published [guidance to help local authorities produce their local toilet strategies](#) in May 2019.

The guidance refers to the British Standards document [BS6465-4:2010 'Sanitary installations. Code of practice for the provision of public toilets'](#) which, among other things, provides guidance on facilities for disabled people. This includes recommending that Changing Places toilet facilities should be provided in "areas with heavy use".

1.3. Planning policy

The Welsh Government's planning policy is set out in [Planning Policy Wales \(PPW\)](#). PPW is a high-level document supported by Technical Advice Notes (TANs) that provide more detailed guidance on specific planning issues.

[TAN 12: Design](#) includes 'inclusive design' as one of its overarching issues. It states that:

5.3.7 Those seeking permission to build new and public commercial buildings are encouraged to include in their plans accessible 'Changing Places' toilet facilities in addition to standard accessible toilets. Changing Places toilets are facilities specifically designed to accommodate adults whose needs are not met by standard disabled toilets. They incorporate adult-length

padded and height-adjustable changing tables, hoists, peninsular WCs and shower facilities. [Research Service emphasis]

Changing Places toilet facilities are therefore encouraged rather than mandated in certain new developments.

1.4. Building Regulations

Part M of the Building Regulations relates to 'Access to and use of buildings'. Section 5 focuses on 'Sanitary accommodation in buildings other than dwellings' and states that:

5.1 In principle, suitable sanitary accommodation should be available to everybody, including **sanitary accommodation designed for wheelchair users, ambulant disabled people**, people of either sex with babies and small children or people encumbered by luggage. [Research Service emphasis]

Section 5 also states that:

5.5 Toilet accommodation needs to be suitable, not only for disabled people, but for all people who use the building. For disabled people, suitable toilet accommodation may take the form of a specially designed cubicle in separate-sex toilet washrooms, or a self-contained unisex toilet. For wheelchair users in particular, a self-contained unisex toilet is always the preferred option since, if necessary, a partner or carer of a different sex can enter to give assistance. Wheelchair-accessible unisex toilets should always be provided in addition to any wheelchair-accessible accommodation in separate-sex toilet washrooms. Wheelchair-accessible unisex toilets should not be used for baby changing.

5.6 The provision of an enlarged cubicle in a separate-sex toilet washroom can be of benefit to ambulant disabled people, as well as parents with children and people (e.g. those with luggage) who need an enlarged space. **In large building developments, separate facilities for baby changing and an enlarged unisex toilet incorporating an adult changing table are desirable.** [Research Service emphasis]

Therefore, while Part M encourages provision of an adult changing table in a larger unisex toilet in certain buildings, this is not mandated. Part M does not explicitly mention Changing Places toilet facilities.

2. Welsh Government action

The Minister for Housing and Local Government, Julie James AM, who is responsible for planning and Building Regulations, wrote to the Chair of the Petitions Committee in

relation to this petition on 15 November 2019. In her letter, the Minister states that her officials are considering how provision of Changing Places toilet facilities can be strengthened in large public buildings. The options include:

- improving the guidance in Part M of the Building Regulations;
- enhancing provision through the planning process, where there is evidence of local need in the local authority's toilet strategy; and
- providing Changing Places toilet facilities in certain projects that receive Welsh Government funding.

No timeframe is provided for completing this work.

The letter stresses that Building Regulations only apply in certain circumstances where work is being carried out, so any change to Building Regulations may need to be complimented by other actions aimed at increasing provision of Changing Places toilet facilities.

3. UK Government action

The previous UK Government recently [consulted on making Changing Places toilets mandatory](#) in large public buildings in England by changing Part M of the Building Regulations. The consultation ran from May to July 2019 and the government did not publish a response to the feedback it received. At the time of writing this briefing, it remains to be seen whether the incoming UK Government, following the General Election, will take this work forward.

4. National Assembly for Wales action

The issue of Changing Places toilet facilities was raised in Plenary during 2019, including by Mark Isherwood AM on [16 July](#) and by Russell George AM on [23 October](#). In his question, Russell George AM referred to specific funding available to English NHS trusts for installing Changing Places toilet facilities and asked what the Welsh Government is doing to improve the provision of in Wales.

The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan AM, replied:

... It is obviously very important that we do have Changing Places widely available for people who do need them I believe there are 45 across Wales,
...

... Building Regulations are already encouraging in certain buildings the provision of enlarged, unisex toilets, incorporating an adult changing table, and my colleague Julie James, the Minister for Housing and Regeneration, has

instructed officials to consider options to increase the provision of Changing Places toilets where the Building Regulations apply. So, it is possible to use the building regulations to ensure that Changing Places toilets are available.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.