

The Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) is concerned that the failure to provide adequate public toilets in Bristol severely undermines the walking environment in the city. The lack of suitable toilet facilities has serious consequences for the physical and mental health of individuals concerned and an impact on the city as a whole. The provision of toilet facilities should be considered in the wider context of economic wellbeing, quality of life, public health, equalities and inclusion. A complete solution is not straightforward and we do not propose one, but we make suggestions in this paper for consideration by local policy makers, practitioners and relevant organisations.

Good quality toilet facilities, conveniently located and accessible to the public, are important for all and especially for: older people; small children and people caring for babies that require changing; disabled people; carers who need to assist those for whom they are caring; people with a range of health conditions including incontinence, irritable bowel syndrome, and Crohn's disease; women who are pregnant or at the menopause; menstruating women and girls; homeless people; mobile workers including delivery drivers, taxi drivers, bus drivers, and police officers; tourists and visitors.

### **Bristol City Council public toilet provision**

In 2018, in a bid to reduce costs and balance the budget, Bristol City Council closed 18 public on-street toilets across the city and launched a Community Toilet Scheme (see below). Problems with the Community Toilet Scheme have led to calls for the city council to reconsider its stance on the provision of toilets for public use.

- A review of public toilet provision should be undertaken including the distribution, availability, type and quality of toilet facilities across the city, and an assessment of need
- Bristol City Council policy on toilet facilities (including local authority and alternative provision) should ensure adequate provision and distribution across the city
- There should be no further reduction in Bristol's public toilet provision
- Consideration should be given to reopening some public toilets that are currently closed
- The costs and benefits of public toilet provision should be fully assessed, including the impact of charging for some provision
- A budget should be allocated for maintaining and upgrading public toilets and the running of the Community Toilet Scheme
- Lessons should be learned from local authorities that have maintained or improved public toilet provision
- An appropriate policy for public toilet provision in new developments should be included in Bristol's Local Plan
- Public toilets should be open during daylight hours in larger parks and green spaces
- Public toilet facilities, or alternative facilities, should be clearly signposted
- Where Bristol City Council is eligible for funding e.g. Changing Places, bids should be submitted
- Models should be investigated, including planning conditions and financial incentives, which combine public toilet facilities with other purposes e.g. cafés and information centres
- Public toilet facilities should be available at transport hubs and interchanges, or clear signage provided to the nearest community toilet facility (within 400m)

### **Community Toilet Scheme**

The key elements of Bristol's community toilet scheme are: a sign is displayed in the windows of participating businesses and organisations; the toilets are free for the public with no obligation to make a purchase; a list of community toilet facilities is published on the city council website. Problems with Bristol's scheme include: lack of resources, including officer time, to administer and develop the scheme; inaccuracies in the description and location of facilities; signs not displayed in windows; staff unaware that premises are part of the scheme, and; poor public awareness.

- The community toilet scheme should supplement but not replace public toilet provision
- The scheme should be promoted through street signs and signs displayed in the windows of participating premises
- Sources of funding should be explored and a budget allocated for the development and maintenance of the Community Toilet Scheme
- An annual payment for participating organisations should be considered, to cover the costs of additional toiletries and cleaning
- Regular monitoring should ensure facilities are available, accurately described and well maintained
- Developers of larger mixed-use schemes should be required to include toilet provision for the public
- Community groups and voluntary sector organisations should be actively involved in promoting and monitoring the Community Toilet Scheme

### **Toilets for Disabled People**

- Toilet facilities for disabled people should be available across the city and accessible free of charge by RADAR key
- Changing Places Toilets (with more space and the right equipment, including a height adjustable changing bench, peninsular toilet and ceiling hoist) should be available at key sites across the city
- Funding opportunities for specialised facilities should be pursued by Bristol City Council, businesses, the voluntary sector and other relevant organisations as appropriate
- Red emergency cords in accessible toilets must not be missing, cut short, out of reach or tied up

### **Other activities**

- Schemes such as ‘Just Can’t Wait’ cards should be promoted (the card can be shown at retail and service premises to gain access to toilets not normally available to the general public)
- Neighbourhood projects to enhance the provision of toilet facilities for the public should be supported e.g. Bedminster Toilet Map

### **Campaigning**

- BWA seeks to work with other organisations with an interest in public toilet provision including Bristol Disability Equality Forum (BDEF), West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL), Bristol Women’s Voice (BWV); Bristol Older People’s Forum (BOPF); BristolAgeUK; Bristol Health Partners, and; ACORN the community union

### **Useful references**

UK toilet map <https://www.toiletmap.org.uk/>  
 Bristol toilet facilities for the public [Public toilets \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk/public-toilets)  
 Changing Places [Changing Places Toilets \(changing-places.org\)](http://changing-places.org)  
 Changing Places funding [Changing Places toilets programme round 2: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444444/Changing_Places_toilets_programme_round_2_prospectus.pdf)  
 Red Cord campaign [Safer Toilets - Euan's Guide \(euansguide.com\)](http://euansguide.com)  
 Bristol’s community toilet scheme [Join the Community Toilet Scheme \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk/community-toilet-scheme)  
 Community toilet schemes guidelines [Community Toilet Schemes in London \(ageuk.org.uk\)](http://ageuk.org.uk)  
 Community toilet scheme guideline <http://fombl.org.uk/Community+Toilet+Schemes+PTUK.pdf>  
 Just Can’t Wait scheme [Just Can't Wait Card by BBUK - Bladder & Bowel UK](http://bbuk.org.uk)  
 Bedminster Toilet Map [bedminster-toilet-map.pdf \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](http://ageing-better.org.uk)

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