

P-05-1453 Accessible and clean public toilets

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 8 Gorffennaf 2024
Petitions Committee | 8 July 2024

Reference: SR24/8973

Petition Number: P-05-1453

Petition title: Provide funding and support for the adequate provision of accessible and clean public toilets

Text of petition:

Wales Seniors Forum research shows that many older people do not go out or reduce the time they are out of the house because of a lack of public toilets. This can lead to isolation and loneliness. Inadequate provision of facilities is a public health issue that affects all of us, preventing some from fully accessing their communities.

Background

There has been recognition by the Welsh Government that a lack of adequate toilet facilities is a public health issue, and can have a disproportionate impact on some population groups.

Toilets for public use matter to everybody and remain a high-profile issue. They are, however, even more important to certain groups within society, including older people, people with disabilities, people with



particular needs (including certain medical problems), women, children and young people and their families.

These groups can be disproportionately affected by poor provision, for example, poor provision is understood to have particular negative impacts on older people, as some may be less likely to leave their homes without having confidence that adequate facilities will be available to them. This can contribute to increased social isolation and inactivity, as well as affecting people's ability to maintain independence and dignity in later life.

The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 requires each local authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilets strategy. This must include an assessment of their 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 Act does not place a duty on local authorities to provide or maintain public toilets, nor is there a specific requirement for local authorities to implement their toilet strategies.

In developing their local toilets strategies, it's expected that local authorities will consider the wide range of toilet facilities that are available in their areas, including those in public buildings such as libraries, leisure centres etc., and also those in private businesses.

In its response to the Petitions Committee (3 July 2024) the Welsh Government says that in the context of the ongoing challenging financial climate, it is more important than ever to encourage creative solutions to better meet the public's need for access to suitable toilet facilities.

Solutions could include community asset transfers and empowering town and community councils and social enterprises to take on responsibilities for managing standalone public toilets, if proposals are sustainable. The Welsh Government has worked with the UK Government to ensure that standalone public toilets in Wales now receive 100% relief from business rates.

We expect local authorities to continue to take every opportunity to talk to the public and representative groups about the challenges they face in accessing local toilet facilities and equally to key delivery partners, such as town and community councils, to listen to concerns and seek

views and involvement in identifying and delivering sustainable solutions.

There's further discussion of the health, wellbeing, and environmental impacts of poor toilet provision, including for different groups of people, in the Fourth Assembly Health Committee's [report on the public health implications of inadequate public toilet facilities](#) (2012).

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.