

Government review to boost the provision of toilets for women and men

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (31 October 2020) launched a review to ensure better provision of toilets for women and men.

Evidence shows that increasing numbers of publicly accessible toilets are being converted into 'gender neutral' facilities, causing problems for women and the elderly in particular.

The review will also look at signage, which should be clearer and use sex-specific language, to avoid confusion.

Women often have to face excessive queues for toilets or don't have access to appropriate facilities that meet their needs when out. This can mean that women are reluctant to go out or take trips that many take for granted, and are less likely to feel comfortable using mixed-sex facilities.

Over recent years there has also been a trend towards replacing female only facilities with 'gender neutral' toilets – something that has caused concern and is against legislation where public authorities have a duty to provide safe spaces for women in lavatories in buildings. This was illustrated last year by the controversy over the abolition of toilets for women in the Old Vic theatre in London.

The [technical review](#), led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, aims to address this by considering the ratio of female toilets needed versus the number for men, given the need for women to use always use cubicles, and will address misconceptions that removing sex-specific toilets are a requirement of equality legislation.

This is already the case for regulations and guidance for the provision of toilets in schools, where separate provision of male and female toilets is required.

It would also take into account the needs of all members of the community, to ensure there is a fair provision of accessible and unisex toilets for the disabled and families with children. Ahead of providing clearer guidance to all those operating public toilets in England.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

The review that I have launched today will help women be assured of the necessary provision of toilets. This is a necessity, and I have listened to the concerns raised by many women and the elderly in relation to this issue.

I have launched a review to establish the best way to deliver this as a priority and make sure that women can expect a sense of

dignity, security and safety when using facilities. We want to maintain safeguards that protect women and the proper provision of separate toilets, which has long been a regulatory requirement, should be retained and improved.

The government has already taken a number of steps recently to increase provision of 'Changing Places' toilets for disabled people, as well as encouraging councils to open up public toilets following the COVID lockdown and increasing business rate relief for public toilets.

There needs to be a public service provision for everyone in our community, and this review will help to deliver on that objective.

The review will look to gather views from all those interested as well as calling on the technical knowledge of industry experts.

This is separate to the recent government consultation aimed at increasing provision of Changing Places toilets to better support those providing care to severely disabled people.

When the review is concluded, alongside providing clearer guidance the government will also consider updating building regulations or building standards to specify the number of toilets provided for each sex.