

# Local authorities expected to improve access to public toilets

The move comes following concerns that local authorities have been closing public toilets, and that better use could be made of toilets within public buildings, such as libraries and sport centres.

A lack of accessible local toilets can limit people's lives by stopping them going out, which can lead to isolation, anxiety and other health conditions. Certain groups of people are more likely to be impacted than others, with the elderly, people with certain health conditions and disabilities, carers and parents of young children most affected.

Under the Welsh Government's Public Health (Wales) Act, local authorities now have one year to assess the needs of its community, including changing facilities for babies and Changing Places facilities for disabled persons, and put a strategy in place to ensure the public will have greater access to these facilities.

The expectation is that the strategy will go beyond the provision of traditional stand-alone public toilets, and look at new and creative solutions, including bringing toilets in public buildings into wider use and working with private businesses to make their facilities available to the public.

The Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"While we would all benefit from greater public access to toilet facilities, there are certain groups for whom a lack of public toilets can cause distress, eventually discouraging them from visiting parts of the community.

"I understand the pressures on local authority services, but as well as isolating members of the community, poor provision can impact on tourism, the economy and use of public amenities. Through long-term planning and creative thinking we can improve people's experiences when they are out and about in their communities."

Mr Gething added:

"I expect local authorities to talk to the public and representative groups about the challenges they face in accessing local toilets, listen to their concerns and get them involved in improving access in their community."

Statutory guidance on how local authorities prepare, consult on and publish

their local toilets strategies will be issued in the coming weeks.