



BTA SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICE IN 'AWAY FROM HOME' TOILET PROVISION

1. SIGNAGE AND COMMUNICATION

- 1.1 Directional signage is very important, especially for visitors. Signs should show the direction and distance to the nearest public convenience with symbols for various available facilities.
- 1.2 An external toilet location name will assist both residents and visitors identify where public conveniences are situated.
- 1.3 There are many benefits to be gained by displaying warning signs to deter vandalism, e.g. 'Police Regularly Patrol These Toilets', 'CCTV Working In This Area' 'Any Criminal Action Will Be Dealt With Accordingly'.
- 1.4 The Sexual Discrimination Act 1975 allows employment of male or female staff to clean toilets. Courtesy signs stating "male or female cleaners at this site" help the public to feel more secure when confronted by a mobile cleaner of the opposite sex.
- 1.5 All toilets should display a sign giving the address and telephone number of the person(s) responsible for their provision. This generally speeds up the reporting of any problems between mobile cleaner visits and is also an opportunity to respond and monitor customer complaints. It is also good 'UR' – user relations.
- 1.6 Health promotion material aimed at preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases along with telephone numbers for local hospital departments/clinics can be communicated in the relative privacy of toilets used by the general public.

2. DÉCOR AND MAINTENANCE

- 2.1 Toilet providers have the opportunity to develop their own colour co-ordinated external and internal décor in their toilets.
- 2.2 Low energy, vandal resistant lighting, fitted flush into ceilings and operated by solar sensors, will ensure the correct level of illumination at all times of day and night. White ceilings and wall tiles are excellent day light reflectors.
- 2.3 Safety floor coverings with continuous sheeting and impervious welded joints are preferred to tiles, which are grouted. Grouting absorbs urine and is more difficult to keep clean and odour free.
- 2.4 Windows that are partially open to assist ventilation during the day can create opportunities for people to peer in, becoming a danger in respect of safety to users of those premises.
- 2.5 Sound maintenance programmes and proper programme performance monitoring will ensure that operational problems are minimised along with reduced closure periods.
- 2.6 The frequency of inspections relates to the speed of defect reporting. Prompt replacement/repair procedures are key to the maintenance of all 'away from home' toilets.
- 2.7 Adequate supervision of the day-to-day management of any toilets provided will also avoid inconsistencies in standards of service.

3. FIXTURES AND FITTINGS PROVISION

- 3.1 All urinals should be fitted with flush control systems to reduce water consumption. Water reduction devices and systems will also reduce water consumption in the cubicles.
- 3.2 Older style toilets were not designed for family, mother and young children or disabled needs and certainly not for baby changing by males.
- 3.3 Wall mirrors, particularly in ladies washroom make up areas, are an essential need. Additional lighting and worktops on which to place handbags whilst washing hands provide added value.
- 3.4 Modern design automatic, combined hand washing and drying units are energy efficient and space saving units.
- 3.5 Cleaning methods for all stainless steel equipment need to be properly enforced. Gents urinals, in particular, require a deep clean periodically in order to remove the accumulated lime scale and urinal salts.
- 3.6 No smoking signs help minimise any smoking in toilets and confirm compliance with the law.
- 3.7 Wall mounted metal litter bins with light weight bin liners, provide suitable receptacles for litter in both ladies and gents toilets, as well as accessible and family/baby change facilities. Litter waste should not be mixed with any sanitary waste material.

4. CLEANLINESS STANDARDS

- 4.1 The importance of high quality cleaning in 'away from home' toilets cannot be overstated. Standards of cleanliness vary enormously throughout the UK and cleaning requirements are usually set out in a cleaning specification - together with cleaning materials to be used and their frequency of use.
- 4.2 In high usage sites, unattended toilets should be cleaned every hour and in low usage sites up to four times daily based on usage, by mobile cleaners.
- 4.3 Monitoring of cleaning activities through daily or weekly inspections is considered good practice to help maintain high standards.
- 4.4 Higher standards of cleaning are achieved by having clear cleaning specifications and properly trained staff. The BTA has developed a training course for operatives and supervisors in toilet washroom cleaning, in conjunction with The British Institute of Cleaning Science. Courses can be provided locally by any recognised BICSc training centre.
- 4.5 The cleaning standards of mobile teams will depend upon the number of times the toilets are scheduled for cleaning per day, and how busy the facilities are.
- 4.6 Corners of cubicles and floor areas generally require special cleaning procedures with a machine cleaning regime.
- 4.7 Graffiti removal from various surfaces can be a tedious and frustrating process. The best solutions lie in effective prevention, together with the use of building materials and finishes which resist the application of graffiti, as well as removal of graffiti at the earliest opportunity.

5. HYGIENE EQUIPMENT

- 5.1 Soap dispensers (preferably no-touch) are regarded as a more hygienic and cost effective solution to soap tablets, which can be wasteful and unhygienic. Every time soap tablets are used they leave the residue of the previous user on the tablet. Soap trays tend to be a holding surface for water causing the soap to dissolve into a soggy mess.
- 5.2 Labour costs are usually the most expensive item in the provision of toilet tissue. The most economical and hygienic systems are those with built-in back up supply, particularly when full time attendants are not on site.
- 5.3 Larger twin tissue 900 sheet rolls in 2 ply tissue, with no cardboard core, require less labour to replace, and result in less floor litter.
- 5.4 Toilet tissue dispensers can be provided free on loan, subject to using suppliers' consumables. Dispensers should enclose all but the next available portion to maintain hygiene.
- 5.5 'Jumbo Toilet Rolls' and holders can impinge upon cubicle space, and have no back up supply. They either get replaced before running out - leading to costly waste or they are left to run out - leading to user frustration.
- 5.6 Single domestic size toilet rolls do not provide an automatic back up and cannot be topped up when partially used, similar to the 'jumbo system' above.
- 5.7 Feminine hygiene disposal units should be provided in all ladies cubicles.
- 5.8 Electrical air ventilation should be activated by P.I.R sensor to ensure the system is not running continuously. Refer to Building Regulations for minimum air changes.
- 5.9 Air freshening units, in support of ventilation systems, particularly baby change facilities and busy toilets, again add value to the washroom ambience. They are not designed to remove malodours but to help mask them.
- 5.10 Air freshening units need to be fitted at a minimum height of three metres to avoid vandalism. At this height, steps are required for regular service of battery and gels.
- 5.11 Mains electrical air freshening units are more effective and usually only require quarterly fragrance top ups.

6. GENERAL COMFORT AND CUSTOMER CARE

- 6.1 Inspections by senior provider management should take place once a week in high usage sites and once a month in low usage sites, to ensure proper standards of hygiene are being adhered to.

- 6.2 All toilets should provide hot water for hand washing at an appropriate temperature of 45°C.
- 6.3 All cubicles for women should contain bags for soiled sanitary towels as well as feminine hygiene disposal units. A communication message of "Bag it and Bin it" is also recommended to avoid costly and unnecessary toilet blockages.
- 6.4 Alternative methods of hand drying are desirable to ensure continuity of supply and provide for customer choice, e.g. electrical hand dryers and paper towels.
- 6.5 Soap dispensers should be provided at a 1 dispenser to 2 wash-basin ratio.
- 6.6 It is recommended that all public toilets are equipped with dispensing or vending machines for sanitary towels, disposable nappies and condoms. *Vending machines for other products in high usage sites could be provided for added value for users and a revenue earner for the provider.*
- 6.7 It is recommended that all cubicles contain some form of bactericidal seat wipe, as toilet paper often used to cover seats can lead to blockages.

7. ACCESSIBLE TOILETS

- 7.1 Toilet providers have a responsibility to ensure that all toilets comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Refer Doc M of the 2004 Building Regulations and British Standard 8300.
- 7.2 Entrance doors should open outwards should be in a contrasting colour to the door as white grab rails on white backgrounds cannot be seen by the partially sighted (DDA).
- 7.3 An extractor fan or air freshening unit should be installed to improve ventilation and air quality, since these toilets are used less frequently and are normally fully enclosed.
- 7.4 Grab rails adjacent to the toilet bowls should be designed and fitted correctly and hand wash basins should be accessible from the WC bowl (DDA).
- 7.5 Coat hooks and wall mirrors should be fitted at the appropriate height and toilet flush handles should be in reach of a disabled person in a wheelchair – i.e. furthest from the wall (DDA).
- 7.6 Where RADAR keys are in use, details of where the nearest key is located are necessary, including the address and telephone number of where keys can be purchased.
- 7.7 Where space is sufficient in accessible toilets, adult changing facilities should be provided.
- 7.8 Emergency alarm cords or buttons should be within reach at floor and waist level, in case an accessible toilet user requires assistance whilst in the toilet (DDA).

8. BABYCHANGE FACILITIES

- 8.1 All toilets in public places should cater for the needs of parents of either sex with babies and young children.
- 8.2 The best-designed family friendly units are separate cubicles/rooms catering for both sexes. They should include an extra width entrance door for pushchairs or double buggies, large easy sliding door locks, bright lighting and wall murals, a permanently fixed changing table with security rail and a wall mounted toddler seat, with safety straps.
- 8.3 There should be a washbasin, a supply of warm water with a soap cream dispenser, paper wipes, a large nappy disposal unit and air freshening. Additional coat hooks, shelves, wall mirrors, waste bins and a nappy dispensing unit should also be included.
- 8.4 A child and/or adult WC are also required to cater for the toileting needs of those accompanying babies.

9. PUBLIC TOILET OPENING HOURS

- 9.1 Public toilets should be open at least 12 hours a day. Where they are located in a shopping area they should open one hour before shops open and close one hour after shops close.
- 9.2 It is essential that 24-hour toilets are provided, particularly in busy areas, adjacent to transport, leisure and entertainment hubs. Numbers provided will depend on the numbers of potential users. These can be accessed by coin or RADAR key to prevent abuse or anti-social behaviour.
- 9.3 The growing night time economy has brought with it the growing problem of street urination, which has led to the development of new, innovative street urinal solutions.

10. SECURITY ISSUES

- 10.1 All 'away from home' toilets should be well illuminated, both internally and externally.
- 10.2 Full time supervision/attendants have proven to be the best security for busy toilets.
- 10.3 A single user entrance, adjacent to an attendant's office, will help minimise anti-social behaviour. Full time attended toilets also provide a consistently high standard of cleanliness and hygiene.
- 10.4 Where attendants are not possible, providers should liaise with local police and other relevant organisations, in order to combat the problems caused by cottaging, drug abuse, vandalism and other anti-social activities. Regular security visits are recommended.

10.5 Use of CCTV cameras adjacent to toilets, helps members of the public feel more secure when approaching and entering the building and has also reduced the incidence of anti-social behaviour, particularly when clear communication signage has warned of legal action against identifiable offenders. CCTV cameras can also be positioned in common areas of toilets.

11. AUTOMATIC PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

11.1 APC's or "superloos" have been in use in the UK for more many years. An advantage is that they are available 24 hours a day. They are normally self-cleaning and vandals do not like spending 20 pence (normal entrance fee) to gain access simply for misuse or abuse.

11.2 APC's are equipped with an automatic timed control cleansing cycle, which is activated after each user has vacated the toilet.

11.3 Fully inclusive service provision and maintenance charges are included in lease agreements which some authorities have found very expensive to operate, certainly those which have been provided in rural locations with low usage figures. All APC's have automatic user counters, which enable management to measure costs per user.

11.4 Many design features based upon the individual toilet cubicles of the "superloos" have been incorporated into factory built 'semi-automatic' cubicles with en-suite hand wash units. These units can be incorporated into a new building, to suit differing locations or 'inbuilt' into existing buildings, as part of a refurbishment project.

11.5 The internal features of APC's and semi-automatic cubicles are durable, due to careful use of appropriate materials and provide good fire resistance. Hot water supply, soap and tissue dispensing systems are built into the cubicle walls. Feminine hygiene, litter disposal and sharps disposal units are also built into the walls with sealed, fire resistant collection containers located at the rear of each cubicle, in the service area.

11.6 Automatic flushing of both W.C bowls and urinal floor washing enhance cleanliness and hygiene levels.

12. CUBICLES

12.1 Most cubicles in 'away from home' toilets are too narrow and, when combined with an inward opening door, cause problems for people entering – particularly those with shopping bags and small children.

12.2 Outward opening doors raise health and safety issues and are not appropriate in most toilets.

12.3 The best solution is to provide larger cubicles for all users – or at least one or more larger cubicles for those with particular needs as mentioned above.

12.4 All cubicles should contain a hook for jackets, coats and bags and ideally some shelving to prevent bags being placed on wet floors.

12.5 All ladies cubicles should contain a suitable container for the disposal of sanitary waste.

12.6 Cubicle sizes are referred to in British Standard 6465 Part 2 (2006), which is currently being updated.

13. ENERGY AND WATER CONSERVATION

13.1 An increasing number of toilet providers now install a range of energy saving fixtures and fittings.

13.2 These include:

- automatic lighting controls through the use of PIR sensors and timers
- automatic non-touch tap water systems with measured water portion delivery and timed cut-off
- automatic urinal flushing through infra red sensors
- non-touch toilet cistern water reduction systems through automated control valves
- solar powered lighting and water heating systems

13.3 Maximum use of natural lighting reduces the need for electric lighting.

13.4 Maximum use of natural ventilation reduces the need for electric air extraction or de-odorising systems.

13.5 Where use of water for flushing is minimised, it is essential that an adequate cleaning regime be implemented to ensure maintenance of hygiene standards.

13.6 An increasing number of toilet providers now use waterless urinals – which again require an effective cleaning regime to minimise bacteria and consequential odour build-up in the urinal.

14. PARTNERSHIPS

14.1 A number of major toilet providers now contract out their toilet cleaning and maintenance activities to specialist companies.

14.2 This removes the day-to-day responsibilities of maintaining standards and allows the provider to concentrate on core activities.

14.3 Contract monitoring then becomes the key task for the department responsible and, away from the day to day service 'fire fighting' activities, allows some proper management time to plan improvements and extensions to the toilet service.

- 14.4 It is essential for any outside contractor to work to an agreed and detailed contract specification with adequate monitoring and reporting procedures.
- 14.5 The production and circulation of weekly/monthly contract reports and key data to the widest relevant audience – including operatives – ensures that all those involved in providing the service are kept informed about current and future levels of performance.
- 14.6 A regular site inspection by client management also contributes to both client perception of the service being provided and contractor awareness of client involvement.
- 14.7 In summary, 'away from home' toilets require a higher level of quality measurement and overall management than historically provided, due to the low level of priority normally allocated to this basic public service.

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