



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

**Department for Levelling up, Housing and
Communities**

Technical Policy Division
Building Safety Programme
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Daniel Tattersall
Senior Policy Adviser (Health & Economy)
Scrutiny and Investigations
London Assembly
City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way,
London E16 1ZE
daniel.tattersall@london.gov.uk

Tel: 03034442240
Fax: 020 7035 0018
Email: luke.turner@levellingup.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dluhc

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Your Ref: Public toilet provision

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Dear Daniel Tattersall,

Thank you for writing to our Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, about public toilet provision, I have been asked to reply and am sorry for the delay.

Public lavatories are valuable community amenities. People's ability to work, shop and enjoy their leisure time depends on good access to toilet facilities. Good lavatory provision contributes to public health and helps maintain a high level of public hygiene, this is key as we emerge from the pandemic and as more and more people make use of our public spaces across the country.

The Government encourages local authorities to keep public lavatories open and many local authorities already operate local community toilets schemes to encourage cafés and other businesses to open their toilets to the public. It is for local authorities to decide what facilities to provide in their area. Nevertheless, the Government would encourage all local authorities to consider whether such a scheme would be beneficial in their area.

At Budget 2018, the Government committed to introduce a 100% mandatory relief for public lavatories. The Non-Domestic Rating (Public Lavatories) Bill 2019-21 has received royal ascent and will provide support where removing the additional costs of business rates could help to keep facilities open. The Act delivers on this commitment and will mean that properties that consist wholly or mainly of public lavatories in England and Wales will receive a 100% relief from business rates. The relief is to be granted to properties that are assessed by the Valuation Office Agency for rating purposes as public toilets. This relief could take around 3,500 facilities in England out of rates, many of which are run by town and parish councils.

Access to public toilets, both in municipal and private sector locations, is an important facility for all members of the public. Building owners, including local authorities, have the role to open, maintain and oversee their toilets. The Covid 19 pandemic has highlighted a need for toilets and changed how existing toilets are managed. To help everyone maintain good hygiene, consideration should be given to configuration of toilet facilities to ensure they are kept clean, with social distancing achieved as far as possible and with best practice handwashing followed.

We are working to ensure buildings are safe through clearer standards and guidance. We have a programme of work to upgrade statutory guidance supporting the Building Regulations. Government has committed to review statutory guidance given in Document M (Access to and use of buildings). This includes a review of guidance on new accessible toilets and of wider inclusive design for new buildings. This guidance describes a range of toilets suiting different needs and the review will look to refresh evidence underpinning regulation and its links to best practice standards.

Government has also recently worked to make relevant change to building regulations in England to help add larger accessible toilets, known as Changing Places toilets, to more than 150 buildings a year and has launched a grant of £30 million to install Changing Places toilets into existing premises.

Government also launched and since closed a call for evidence in October 2020 for a technical review on the provision of toilets.

Statutory guidance does, however, point to independent best practice standards on toilet provision in the external environment. Such as BS 8300-1:2018: Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment. External environment. This best practice recommends that public toilets should be provided at locations where people meet, wait or spend time, such as arrival points, car parks, public transport interchanges, retail areas and cafés. It also recommends that a variety of facilities should be provided to ensure that toilets are available for the anticipated range of users (e.g. accessible toilets, Changing Places toilets, family toilets).

Government is working on legalisation, on improving statutory guidance, on a technical review on the provision of toilets and with grant funding for new Changing Places toilets, but there are no plans to make the provision of public toilets a statutory duty for local authorities, backed by ring fenced funding.

With thanks again for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely

Luke Turner

Luke Turner

Principal Architect - Approved Documents M and Q
Technical Policy Division, Building Safety Programme