

Summary

Transport and toilets: Finding solutions which maximise the design and findability of accessible toilets when travelling

About the DRILL Programme

DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the project supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at www.drilluk.org.uk.

Overview of Transport and toilets

This project explored the barriers to disabled people with a range of impairments finding accessible toilets when travelling.

It developed a set of requirements and priorities to provide guidance to service providers to assess, improve and provide toilets that are good for everyone.

Approach

The project involved 12 co-researchers from different regions across Scotland. They were recruited through face-to-face contact, community keyworkers and social media.

Findings

There are not enough accessible toilets. Accessible toilets are often difficult to find and have poor signage. Sometimes they are out of order.

Some toilets require the use of a change machine to get the right money to enter a toilet. This can be complex for someone with, for example, dementia. Some machines are too high for wheelchair users.

Public toilets, including accessible toilets, are often too small for a disabled person to move around safely. Sinks that are too small can splash water and hand-driers can be hard to reach.

Confusing buttons can make it difficult to know if a door is locked or unlocked.

Sometimes it's difficult to work out how to switch the lights on. Some use sensors, but others use a cord or switch which can be difficult to find.

Emergency cords are often wound up or made impossible to reach.

Getting colours and colour contrasts right can make a big difference. If the sink and the floor are similar colours, the sink can be invisible. Some disabled people have perceptual challenges where, for example, adjacent coloured surfaces such as moving from a black floor to a white floor can look like a step, leading to a risk of falls.

Loud noise and unclean areas or harsh, artificial smells can be distressing for some disabled people.

The co-researchers described feeling excluded when toilets were hard to find.

Findings (continued)

The complex needs of some disabled people are not well known and rarely considered in toilet design.

Recent changes to standards do give some recognition to cognitive and sensory impairments.

Recommendations

The project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. All recommendations are included in the full report, which is linked below.

- The experiences of disabled people with a range of impairments must be heard to ensure that everybody's needs are taken into consideration
- Governments should ensure that transport providers have better public toilet facilities
- Public toilets should be located in accessible areas, and signage should be clear
- Those who create and regulate standards should insist that toilets are designed in accessible ways and accommodate for a range of impairments
- Involve disabled people in writing and checking any standards
- A new type of emergency cord should be created
- Transport providers should give staff training to ensure that everyone understands their role and responsibilities
- Ensure the regular maintenance of all equipment
- Policy makers should ensure greater public awareness of the distress caused by poor design and equipment
- Sufficient staff must be provided to ensure the maintenance and hygiene of public toilets.

Final report

[Transport and toilets: Finding solutions which maximise the design and findability of accessible toilets when travelling](#)

Please click on report name to read the full report

Project partners

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