

THE TOILET PAPER

Improving public toilets for older people

TACT3, a 3-year research project into helping older people to manage continence concerns, ends in October 2011.

Our part of the project has been looking at ways to design improvements to public toilets.

In 2009 we interviewed nearly 100 people of all ages, from the parents of babies to those over 90, about the barriers faced when needing, finding and using public toilets.

We have also spoken to nearly 20 professionals who work in public toilet provision to find out what problems they face.

As there is significant guidance on toilet design such as British Standards (BS6465 & BS8300), we have focused on 'service design'; how can local authorities improve their current toilet provision?

Our design solution will be The Great British Public Toilet Map - a public participation website to improve the information the local councils give about facilities, and to help this information reach the members of the public who need it.

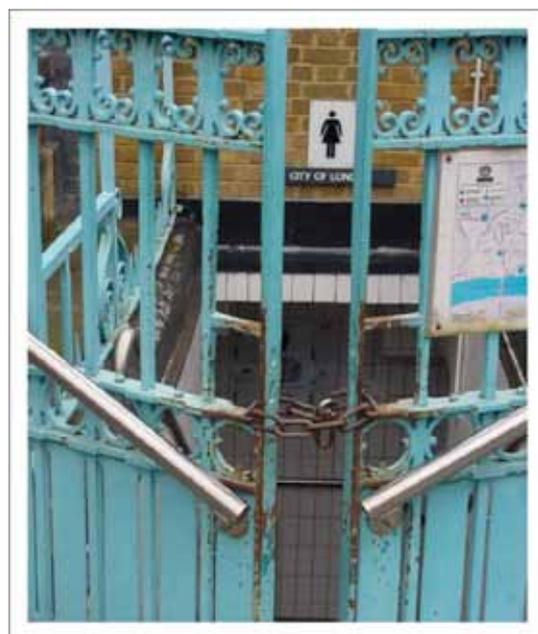
Read more about The Great British Public Toilet Map inside!



new dynamics of ageing
a cross-council research programme



helen hamlyn
centre for design



RATs - Robust Accessible Toilets

We have been lucky enough to receive funding for a new 6-month project - RATs.

RATs will look at the role that public toilets play in wider community life, and explore how different toilet designs can address problems with provision.

We'll be combining our RATs research with the work that we have already done for TACT3.

The result will be an inclusive design guide for publicly accessible toilets to be published later this year.

What the public say...

We learnt from our research interviews about the huge range of problems that people have with public loos, such as planning and finding toilets, adequate privacy, safety, cleanliness and providing toilets in the right locations.

We created 4 profiles to represent some of these views:

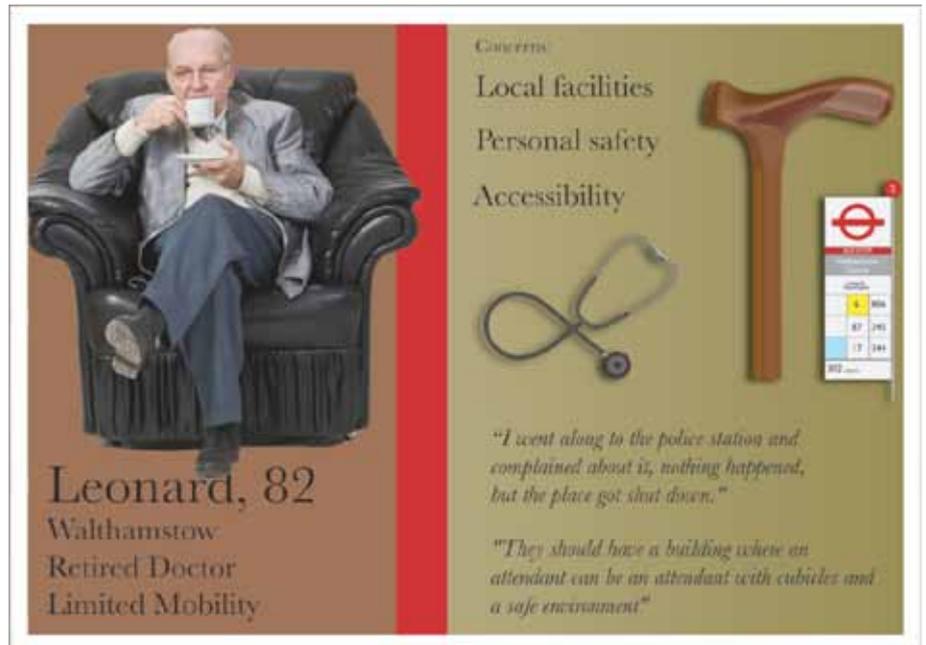
Yasmine, 26, with IBS

Paul, 38, who has a young family

Judith, 60 who takes water tablets

Leonard, 82, who uses a walking aid.

This has helped us to explain to providers the real problems that people face.



Concerns

- Local facilities
- Personal safety
- Accessibility

Leonard, 82
Walthamstow
Retired Doctor
Limited Mobility

"I went along to the police station and complained about it, nothing happened, but the place got shut down."

"They should have a building where an attendant can be an attendant with cubicles and a safe environment"

Leonard is 82. He has limited mobility that keeps him in his local area. He needs toilets that he can use if caught short.

He's had bad experiences in the past (he was robbed in a public toilet), so feels all toilets should have attendants.

What professionals say...



"We may stop having full-time attendants. In the middle of winter there may not be any visitors around at all"

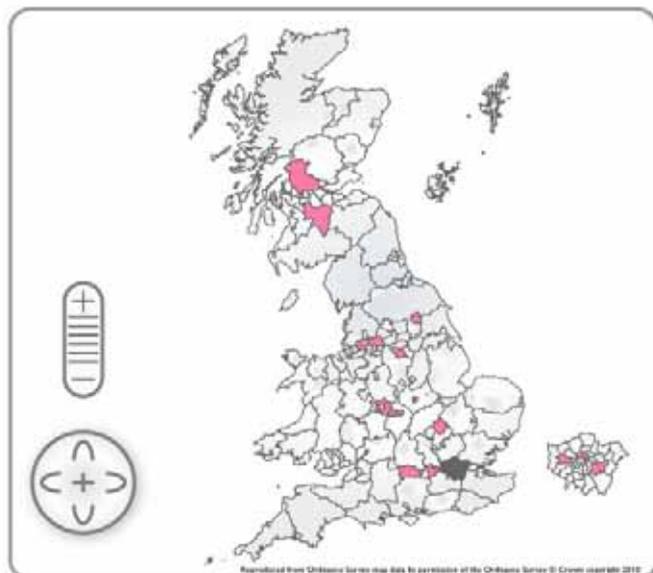
Many people don't use public toilets, instead choosing those in cafes, shopping centres or pubs. Some councils are paying businesses to allow non-customers to use these toilets under a Community Toilet Scheme.

As well as councils we interviewed shopping centre architects, park managers, station managers, department stores and public toilet manufacturers about the problems that they face.

Typically these problems were focused on money; whether for cleaning contracts (the greatest expense) or the cost of vandalism.

Any solution we present will have to improve provision whilst not costing anything!

the great british public toilet map



The Great British Public Toilet Map is a map of public toilets created through public participation and open data.

Tell me more!

Let's get started!

Latest Councils: ...Manchester City Council... ...Lichfield District Council... ...City of Lincoln Council... ...Wandsworth Borough

The Great British Public Toilet Map

The Great British Public Toilet Map will be a public participation project to improve information about the UK's public toilets. It will be the main outcome of our research project into improving public toilets for older people.

Where are the toilets?

Public toilet provision is incredibly fragmented. Over 300 councils provide toilets, as well as parks, stations, shopping centres etc.

A complete map will require the participation of all of these local councils. They need to provide reliable up-to-date data that includes the toilet's location, facilities, access restrictions and opening hours.

This is useful information for most people, but essential for those with continence concerns, to improve their quality of life.

Our map will show where this data exists and where it does not. Where it does exist, people can use the map to find out information on nearby toilets. Where it does not, the website will help the public to write to the council to ask them to participate in the project.

Currently the only way to find out about local facilities is through each council's website (and the quality varies a lot!) The Toilet Map's data, once available, will be free for anyone to reuse to incorporate into local area maps, web sites and smart-phone applications, or could be combined with other datasets to provide more useful services.

Australia have already achieved just such a project (though it was driven by the government, not the public!). You can see their map at <http://www.toiletmap.gov.au>

Get In Touch!

Our research is based entirely on what people tell us about public toilets, and **their feedback on our ideas.**

We would love to hear your views on our work, especially **The Great British Public Toilet Map** – do you think this could work? If not, what are your concerns?

If we've got it all wrong then we'd like to change our final design idea before it's too late!

We held a valuable workshop last year to get feedback on

concept design, so **we will also hold more workshops** this year about public toilets and the website's design. Please get in touch if you would like to take part. You can reach **Jo-Anne or Gail** via phone or email; the contact details are below.

Gail has also been writing a blog! The '**Public Toilets and...**' blog is at: www.gailknight.wordpress.com

Please feel free to leave comments on anything that you read on the blog.



*Concept Design Workshop
November 2009*

TACT³



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About the Researchers

Jo-Anne Bichard is a Research Fellow at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design.

Jo-Anne is leading the TACT3 research into public toilets and the new RATs project. Her background is in Social Anthropology. Jo-Anne is also completing her PhD at UCL on how the design of public toilets excludes members of the public.

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Gail Knight is a Research Associate at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, working full-time on TACT3 research into public toilets and the RATs project.

Her background is in Industrial Design with experience of way-finding. She came up with Westminster's 'SatLav' – a text service to find your nearest toilet.

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