

Report to Health Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Council Motion – Not Every Disability is Visible

Report Author: Mark Hardman, Constitutional Services Officer

Email: mark.hardman@oldham.gov.uk

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Purpose of the Report

The report informs the Committee that a Motion “Not Every Disability is Visible” was considered at the meeting of the Council held on 9th September 2020 and referred to “Overview and Scrutiny”. The report presents some initial considerations of the matters raised in the Motion and invites the Committee to consider how it wishes to deal with the Motion.

Recommendations

The Health Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the report and the information provided and to consider how it wishes to deal with the Motion.

1 Background

1.1 Members will recall that a Motion “Not Every Disability is Visible” was considered at the meeting of the Council held on 9th September 2020 and referred to “Overview and Scrutiny”. The Health Scrutiny Committee has been determined as the appropriate overview and scrutiny body to receive this referral.

1.2 The Motion considered by Council read –

“This Council notes that:

- The charity Crohn’s and Colitis UK is encouraging venues providing accessible public toilets to install new signage. This is to help stop stigma and discrimination towards people with ‘invisible illnesses’ such as Crohn’s Disease or ulcerative colitis.
- There have been instances nationally where such individual using an accessible toilet have been accused by staff members of being ineligible to use them.
- These signs have two standing figures and a wheelchair user with the words Accessible Toilet and the logo ‘Not every disability is visible’.
- The Government has decided recently that large accessible toilets for severely disabled people – known as Changing Places – will be made compulsory for large new buildings, such as shopping centres, supermarkets, sports and arts venues, in England from 2021.

Council resolves to:

- Ensure that accessible toilets on Council premises bear these signs.
- Ask town and district centre retailers and leisure outlets to do likewise with their accessible public toilets.
- Seek advice from the charity Crohn’s and Colitis UK on the information and training we should provide to Council staff members. This is so they understand these illnesses and to prevent potential embarrassment for those who suffer with them
- Ensure that any Changing Places toilets in our buildings are properly signposted for visitors.
- Ensure that the requirement to provide new Changing Place toilets is included within the Council’s future plans for new public buildings in the borough.”

1.3 The Council was not prescriptive as to the nature of the overview and scrutiny consideration and the Committee is therefore invited to determine its approach in considering the Motion.

2 Current Position

2.1 The following paragraph presents background information to some of the issues raised in the Motion.

2.2 ‘Not every disability is visible’ campaign

Crohn’s Disease and Ulcerative Colitis are chronic (ongoing and life-long) conditions in which symptoms vary from person to person and will range from mild to severe and are the two main presentations of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). Two of the symptoms of IBD are diarrhoea which is sometimes mixed with blood, mucus and pus, and cramping pains in the abdomen which can be very severe and often occur before passing a stool. These conditions are hidden so it is not apparent to others that someone is unwell.

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- 2.3 In support of the 'Not every disability is visible' campaign, Crohn's and Colitis UK published survey results which showed that people with invisible disabilities are targets of discrimination by well-meaning members of the public because they are using accessible toilets when they "don't look disabled", for example
- 93% of the public who challenge a healthy-looking person for using an accessible toilet think they are "standing up" for the rights of disabled people or that it's "not fair" on others;
 - 61% of negative incidents experienced by people with Crohn's or Colitis for using the accessible toilets they urgently need, have manifested as verbal and/or physical abuse;
 - 81% of people with Crohn's or Colitis think that the public have little understanding of these conditions and are quick to judge those living with them.
- 2.4 The 'Not every disability is visible' campaign has been running since 2016 and attention has been focused on different sectors over time with successes reported by Crohn's and Colitis UK on their website across retail, travel and hospitality sectors. The campaign looks to raise awareness of Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis and have accessible toilets signposted to highlight that not every disability is visible. Crohn's and Colitis UK have produced a template that participating organisations might wish to use or follow that extends the current sign for an accessible toilet to include two standing figures alongside the wheelchair user and a 'Not every disability is visible' strapline.



2.5 Changing Places toilets

The Changing Places Consortium, which includes voluntary, charitable and governmental bodies, launched its campaign in 2006 on behalf of the over quarter of a million people who cannot use standard accessible toilets. This includes people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, as well as older people. Changing Places toilets are accessible toilets which have extra space and equipment in addition to the standard features of an accessible toilet. A Changing Places toilet should have the following specialist equipment -

- a height adjustable, adult sized changing bench;
- a tracking hoist system which should provide access to the toilet, washbasin, changing bench and open space to transfer;
- adequate space (minimum of 3m x 4m (or the equivalent floor space of 12sqm), with a minimum ceiling height of 2.4m) in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers;
- a centrally placed toilet with space either side for the carers, positioned in a a peninsular arrangement, at least 1m away from the wall on either side;
- a screen or curtain to allow the disabled person and carer some privacy;
- wide tear off paper roll to cover the bench;
- a large waste bin for disposable pads;
- a non-slip floor;

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- a washbasin which should have clear knee space below the bowl and be height adjustable if possible;
 - Shower/floor drain – while not a requirement should be considered for specific relevant type of managed buildings such as leisure centres and transport hubs.

2.6 Changing Places status is awarded by accreditation from the Changing Places Consortium and it is recommended that toilets are marked and signposted by the following sign -



2.7 The Changing Places website www.changing-places.org indicates two Changing Places toilets available in the Oldham Borough area at

- Tesco Oldham Chadderton Superstore, Featherstall Road North, Oldham; and
- Ross Care Independent Living, Keppel Building, Ashton Road West, Failsworth.

2.8 In July 2020 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport announced that Changing Places toilets would be made compulsory both in new public buildings and in those undergoing major refurbishment from 2021. Venues covered by the new requirement include

- places of assembly, recreation and entertainment with a capacity for 350 or more people, including art galleries, cinemas, concert halls, conference centres, further education colleges, universities, hotels that include leisure facilities, libraries, motorway services, museums, places of worship, and theatres; and
- shopping centres or retail parks with gross floor areas of 30,000m² or more, retail premises of 2,500m² or more, sport or leisure buildings over 5,000m², and stadia, theme parks, zoos, or exhibition centres with a capacity above 2,000 people.

To implement the above, amendments to Building Regulations Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings were published in July 2020. A £30M fund to install Changing Places in existing buildings was also announced.

3 **Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider**

3.1 The Committee should consider whether it would be supportive of accessible toilets on Council premises being signed as the 'Not every disability is visible' campaign suggests. If the Committee is supportive, it should consider whether the Deputy Chief Executive be consulted as to any particular financial implications that would arise from the resultant signage required prior to any report back to Council.

3.2 Subject to confirmation as to whether any of the Council's accessible toilets meet the Changing Places specification, the Committee might wish to consider how best to promote the provision of such facilities in light of the recent announcement and change to Building regulations.

4 **Links to Corporate Outcomes**

4.1 N/A

5 **Additional Supporting Information**

5.1 None.

6 **Consultation**

6.1 Consultation with Council services would be undertaken as required by the decisions taken by the Committee.

7 **Appendices**

7.1 None