

## New building requirements for separate male and female toilets

2 years ago



The government has announced it is acting to bring forward changes to regulations that will mean all new non-domestic public and private buildings will be required to provide separate single-sex toilets for women and men and/or a self-contained, private toilet as a minimum.

The change comes amid dignity and privacy concerns from women and elderly people who feel they are being unfairly disadvantaged as publicly accessible toilets are increasingly being converted into gender neutral facilities.

Concerns over the rise of neutral gender facilities has meant that public have been forced to share cubicle and hand-washing facilities, leading to increasing waiting in shared queues, decreased choice and a limitation on privacy and dignity for all.

New regulations and guidance will mean women, who may need to use facilities more often because of pregnancy or sanitary needs, will now be guaranteed appropriate facilities either through a separate single-sex space or through a self-contained, private toilet.

The action taken today builds upon the government's commitment and wider approach to the protection of single sex spaces.

In addition to single sex toilets becoming the default and minimum for new non-residential buildings and places undertaking major refurbishment, the guidelines will encourage the consideration of self-contained toilets, which are a fully enclosed toilet room with a wash hand basin for individual use.

This new approach will help to maximise privacy and dignity for of all, which will be explicit in the

guidance.

A new short [technical consultation](#) to shape the changes has opened.

Kemi Badenoch, Minister for Women and Equalities, said: “It is important that everybody has privacy and dignity when using public facilities. Yet the move towards ‘gender neutral’ toilets has removed this fundamental right for women and girls.

“These proposals will ensure every new building in England is required to provide separate male and female or unisex facilities, and publish guidance to explain the difference, protecting the dignity, privacy and safety of all.”

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Faith & Communities, Baroness Scott, said: “It is extremely important women can feel comfortable when using public facilities, so we are taking action to restore dignity and privacy at the centre of all future provision.

“These proposals will mean separate toilets for men and women, as well as self-contained toilets for those that need them, become a requirement for every new building across England.”

A previous call for evidence on increasing the accessibility of toilets for men and women gathered over 17,000 responses and represented a full range of views – generally calling for greater consideration in the range of toilets to preserve dignity, access, equality, and privacy for all.

The changes will be made through building regulations and guidance. The aim of the new requirements will ensure that:

- separate single-sex toilets facilities are provided for men and women and/or
- self-contained, private toilets are provided where space allows to ensure privacy and safety
- mixed sex shared facilities are not an option, except when lack of space allows only a single toilet

Changing the rules for single sex and/or universal toilets to be required would have positive equality outcomes for those who may not currently feel safe while using toilet facilities.

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