

## phs Group's mission to remove the stigma of male incontinence

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For men dealing with health challenges such as prostate cancer and incontinence, the impact goes far beyond the physical experience. It also has a significant effect on mental health with men facing these issues often experiencing profound stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

[phs Group](#) has been working with organisations such as Prostate Cancer UK to promote open dialogue and offer resources aimed at breaking down the stigma of male incontinence and creating a supportive environment for all men.

FM Director's Claire Middleton recently caught up with Robin White, phs Group's Chief Commercial Officer, to learn more about the BOG STANDARD campaign and what else is keeping him busy right now.

Let's begin by taking a look at some of the stats that clearly highlight the need for action:

- 78% of men feel anxious about accessing disposal facilities when leaving home.
- 64% of men have not been able to attend major life events due to their incontinence.
- 34% of men find it hard to locate a bin in public toilets.

The BOG STANDARD campaign aims to tackle these issues by pushing for inclusive, well-equipped washrooms for men. phs Group has worked tirelessly to boost awareness, release impactful whitepapers that outline the scale of the issue, and encourage businesses to integrate these supportive and inclusive facilities into their buildings.

How BOG STANDARD came about

phs Group began building a relationship with Prostate Cancer UK just under two years ago. "One of the things that became really apparent through that relationship is how stark the stats are," Robin explains.

“One in eight men are likely to experience prostate cancer at some point in their lives and that rises to one in four for black men. Two thirds of those that receive life-saving treatment will become incontinent.

“We found that there was very little focus on aftercare and how survivors can lead as normal a life as possible after treatment. One piece of research we did with Prostate Cancer UK at the end of last year was focused around sports stadiums and football fans and it was discovered that men were not going back to sports after illness because there was nowhere for them to dispose of their incontinence products in privacy or with dignity. That’s where the ‘Back in the Game’ campaign began.”

Robin added: “We want to change this by starting a national conversation and removing the stigma. We want to encourage all public facilities and workplaces to provide incontinence bins in male toilets, because the problem reaches further than football stadiums. It affects a huge range of places such as motorway services, offices, shopping centres, leisure venues and many more.”

Robin is ‘delighted’ with how the campaign is going so far. He said: “It’s really grabbed the attention of the media, and we’ve now placed over 18,000 male incontinence bins across the UK.”

As BOG STANDARD campaign gathers momentum, more and more businesses are taking notice. Manchester United signed up to be the Premier League’s first Gold BOG STANDARD club in November, following the release of stats that showed football fans across the UK were missing out on attending live matches because of incontinence.

In a news article released around the same time, phs Group talked about how the challenges men face was highlighted in a film about lifelong Manchester United fan, Mark Farrington. Mark, a 56-year-old repairs planner, from Horwich in Greater Manchester, was treated successfully for prostate cancer aged 54 but was left incontinent for a period of time.

He said: “You worry constantly – will I leak, will I be able to find anywhere to change my pad? Going to a football game was out of the question. Having bins for me to have been able to dispose of my incontinence pads would have made such a difference to me. You’d know you have somewhere to put it – I would 100% have gone to some games if things had been different, and that would have really helped me to feel back to my old self.”

The gold BOG STANDARD means that men can now visit Old Trafford safe in the knowledge that the toilets will have male incontinence bins and products, such as pads. The club has installed 71 bins across the ground, with each washroom clearly signposted so that men can quickly and easily identify where they can find a male incontinence bin. The club will also be promoting awareness about prostate cancer and incontinence.

“Getting a business like Manchester United on board is only going to help the cause,” Robin said. “It shows how serious businesses are taking the issue. We are already in several conversations with FM businesses about how they can roll it out across the UK and so I’d urge anyone who’s interested to get in touch.”

How facilities managers can get involved with BOG STANDARD

Robin explained: “If they have an account manager already, FM businesses can speak to them, and they will guide them through the different options available. If they don’t have an account manager, they can simply visit our website for more information.”

And the cost to businesses? Robin says there's no need to fear as it's not a costly commitment at all. "It's very cost-effective," he says. "Even more so if phs Group is already visiting your premises for other reasons, it's just one more product to be added to the service, and it will be competitively priced accordingly."

So, what else is keeping Robin and the team busy right now? "Our job is to support our FM customers, and in the immediate term, we're aware that the consequences of the recent budget are at the forefront of a lot of our customers' minds," Robin explained.

"We're focused on helping our customers navigate their way around the cost increases that have been announced surrounded national insurance and national minimum wage. I'd say that's the most immediate pressure, but the ongoing focus is on making sure that sustainability remains at the forefront of all our customer conversations. It's vital to keep looking at how we can support their businesses to be able to provide sustainable solutions to their clients.

"We've got a carbon calculator to help our customers see how much waste goes to landfill or to EFW. With the landfill tax increasing from the beginning of April, it's another pressure that businesses are facing."

For more information about phs Group and the BOG STANDARD initiative, please visit <https://www.phs.co.uk/>.