



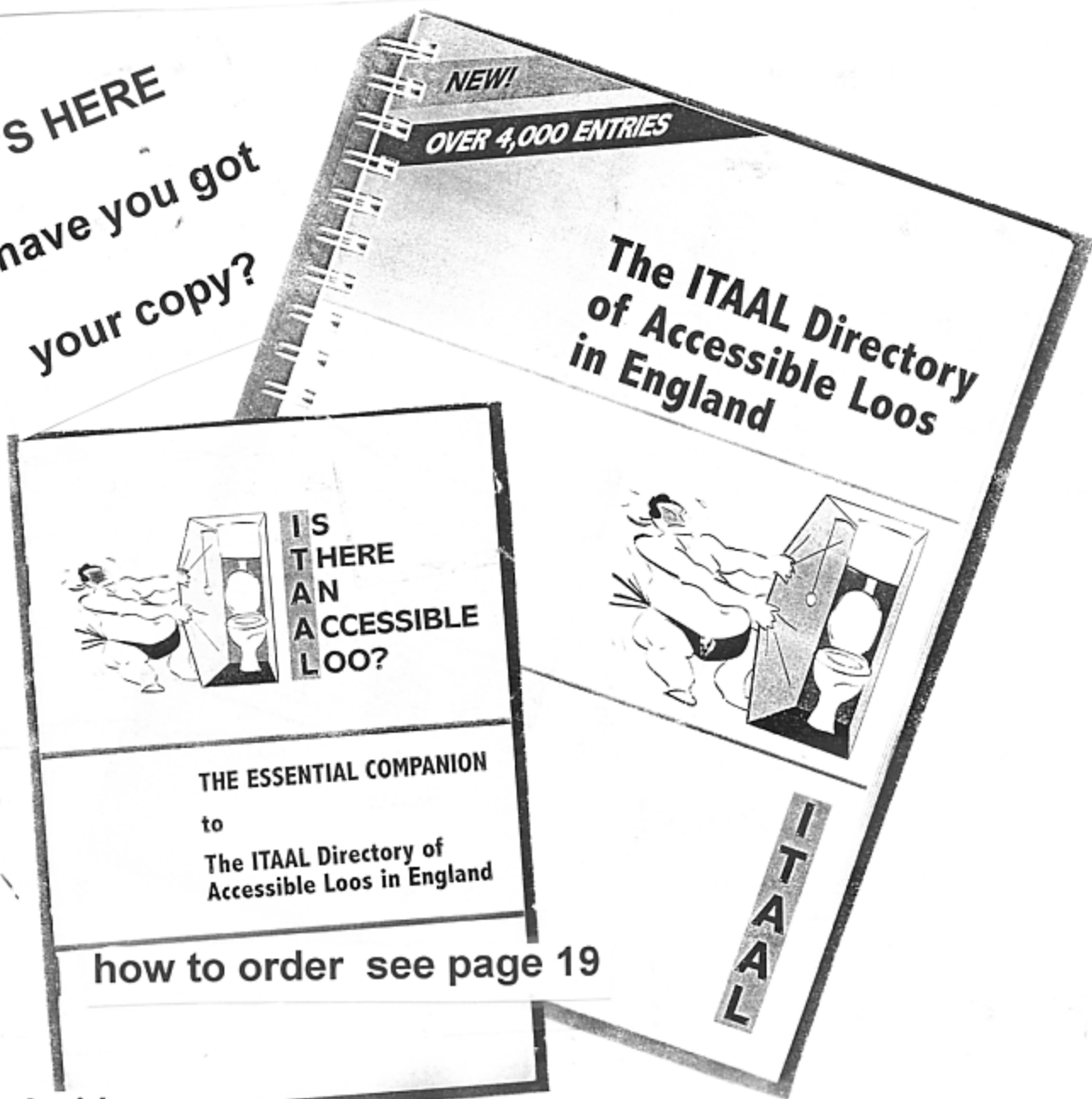
**IS
THERE
AN
ACCESSIBLE
LOO?**

Privy Counsel

Issue 2

winter/spring 2002

**IT'S HERE
have you got
your copy?**



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Accessible toilets
- are they cost-effective?

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 2 of Privy Counsel, (July 2002) with apologies for the long delay. We would like to have sent it out in March but our treasurer warned us that we should not do so until we had secured more funding. We are extremely grateful to Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales for recent core funding which has made it possible to resume activities. We hope that the 'bumper' size of this issue, packed with information, comments and ideas, will make it worth the wait.

Three ITAAL supporters outline personal experience and Points of View picks up a range of users' issues and concerns. Richard Chisnell writes challengingly about accessible loos and the future. He and his Loo of the Year inspectors visit large numbers of accessible loos annually to assess them for the competition. He raises issues that cannot be ignored. We have a report on the British Toilet Association annual conference. Sarah Langton-Lockton writes on the new British Standard and we report on INCONTACT and PAMIS, organisations concerned with personal care needs. As always, we have had to spend much time and effort seeking finance for ITAAL's work - please see our appeal for help on the fund-raising page.

Congratulations....

to Sue Maynard Campbell on being awarded an MBE in the Queens Birthday Honours for her work on employment and training.

Directory - Second Edition

Preparations are in hand to begin work on the second edition and to prepare a major funding proposal for the work. We have advertisements for Loo Champions in the English regions and an Editor for Wales. Contacts are being made in Scotland and Northern Ireland. As before volunteer contributors are needed to identify loos.

Networking –sharing issues and concerns

Care support issues are much in the public domain at present. Obtaining and maintaining adequate care support is a real problem for disabled people no matter what their age. Carers feel taken for granted because they are expected to provide 24-hour care 7 days a week without regular real breaks. Going out for a day may be the only 'holiday' that many can achieve. All too often that day out is spoilt because the 'accessible' loo turns out to be un-useable.

ITAAL was set up because disabled people felt they had a right to a quality of life that included being able to go out and about, and because the question of good standard accessible loos was not being given sufficient attention. Feedback on the Companion Guide backs this up: 'We had not realised just how important the placing of fixtures and fittings in these loos was, or that so many disabled people were having real problems with these loos. We have learnt a lot. "

However this is just a beginning. There is a need for open debate between the major disability organisations to look at common concerns and to address the more difficult areas such as the question of what suits one disabled person will not be right for another.

- Loo providers and the sanitary industry are getting very mixed messages; and 'competition' between different disability groups often takes no account of the urgent need to work out real solutions.
- Health and Safety restrictions placed on personal assistants helping severely disabled people (including elders) mean that the clock is going backwards and disabled people are again being made housebound. Workers must be protected but so must the quality of life of the people needing assistance. Anatomical design means that disabled women who rely on personal assistants suffer most here, as they cannot use

away-from-home loos that don't have hoists.

- PAMIS are campaigning for adult-sized changing tables in accessible loos. Should all accessible loos be expected to have these facilities, or should it be the responsibility of local authorities to meet these needs in central toilet facilities within towns and cities? What about major shopping centres that pride themselves on offering 'a day out for the family' but offer poor toilet facilities?
- The 'battle ground' between disabled people and mothers and babies needs to be addressed. Both have similar loo needs - space and adequate equipment. But rather than shouting at one another, both groups need to come face-to-face with planners and discuss how to produce the best value loo for both.
- Adequate numbers of loos is another area of concern. For years motorway service stations had only one accessible loo, sometimes combined with the baby change. At busy periods waiting times could be 15 minutes or longer. This is slowly changing as refurbishments take place, but interesting comments about these loos are made in Points of View.
- The implications of the DDA mean that real thought has to be given to universal unisex loos where space is limited.
- ITAAL also has concerns about the wheelchair symbol being used to identify accessible loos. What is the standard behind this? Is it saying 'behind this door is an adequately fitted minimum size Part M loo that you can rely on' or 'behind this door is our idea of what an accessible loo should be'. ITAAL would like to see a standard set for the loo access symbol so that disabled people can rely on it. It was because this symbol could not be trusted that so many accessible loos had to be left

out of the Directory. (see Companion pages 46-48)

The time is ripe for groups to come together and talk. ITAAL is planning a consultation exercise to bring together the major disability groups to discuss these issues in Spring 2003. The results will be presented to the British Toilet Association at their annual conference.

Finally.... if a national museum can't get it right – what hope is there. Visiting a state-of-the-art major national museum recently it was found that the drop-down support rail in one accessible loo was only held on by two out of four screws – discovered only when the user put weight on the bar to stand and balance. So much for regular equipment inspections! A formal complaint was made on the day.

VIEWPOINT

ACCESSIBLE TOILETS - ARE THEY COST EFFECTIVE?

Richard Chisnell, Director, British Toilet Association

I support, without question, the need to provide properly equipped and maintained public or away-from-home toilets, suitable for all types of user.

What I am increasingly questioning is the separatist or exclusive toilet 'culture' that has been established now for many years, covering the provision of 'disabled' (yes, they're nearly all still labelled that) toilets.

This 'questioning' arises, not through any lack of understanding of the problems, nor any lessening of my appreciation of the importance – even urgency – of finding solutions to those problems, but simply through travelling around Britain over the last fifteen years, inspecting toilet facilities. I have seldom seen the 'disabled' toilets being used and even when they are used, the provision is so often totally inadequate.

Yes, I have witnessed occasions when a coach load of special needs customers has pulled up outside a busy sea front toilet, where the queue to use the one RADAR key accessible toilet has lasted a very long time indeed. In other words, totally unacceptable provision.

For the most part these toilets - often isolated (round the back, out of sight, firmly locked) toilets are rarely used and, consequently, rarely inspected - witness the leaf debris etc., often found on windless days - not to mention the poor air quality.

RADAR's own literature clearly states that it is not their policy to lock a public toilet, but this still happens. It seems to me that the policy of providing a locked and exclusive toilet facility for a relatively small number of users is not cost effective and discourages loo providers from seriously considering providing inclusive facilities for all types of user - as befits the 21st century.

If we are to persuade local authorities to invest scarce financial resources on the provision of public toilets, we need to ascertain the type and range of users, and their frequency of need and widen the debate to consider more creative and inclusive solutions. We need to think more in terms of a 'loo complex' that could cater for the needs of all users – old/young, male/female, with or without disabilities.

Society is being encouraged, quite rightly, to think 'inclusive' and the provision of any type of away-from-home toilet should not be unduly influenced by the need for 'exclusivity', for one or other type of toilet user. We are all toilet users and we should all expect to find facilities that cater for our specific needs – whatever they are.

This will require a fundamental attitudinal shift, away from the current poorly designed and poorly equipped toilet 'experience' towards a modern - perhaps unisex – facility for everyone, in a secure and properly managed environment.

We should not perpetuate the differences between us, but rather plan for and encourage the commonality of our daily toileting needs.

TO COMPLAIN, OR NOT TO COMPLAIN – THAT IS THE QUESTION

Complaining is not something that the British like to do. Disabled people are very wary of doing so because they are still seen as being ungrateful and not as a customer with a legitimate concern. Also, the amount of emotional energy required to make a formal complaint and get it taken seriously often puts people off.

ITAAL regularly hears a range of concerns about away-from-home loos.

- “Would you clean up the mess from the overflowing disposal bin in the accessible loo so that I can use it?” Cleaner: “I’m not allowed to touch this. I’ll report it and someone will come down.” No one came.
- “My daughter is sitting on the loo and I can’t lift her off because it’s so low – I need help.” Once the emergency is over the question arises: “Why do you have such a low loo?”
- “You have no alarm system and the music is playing so loudly that no one passing the loo door would hear if I was in difficulty.”
- “I made a formal complaint when I found the loo unusable. The manager promised he would get it sorted out. Two weeks later I returned and nothing had been done.”

Deciding how to complain can be tricky. Do you spend time finding the duty manager and make a verbal complaint, or do you go home and write a letter to the company? Common sense would suggest that if it is a simple complaint that can be quickly sorted out, you ask to talk to whoever is in charge. However finding someone to complain too can be an art in itself. If the complaint is

more serious then it needs to be followed up by a letter

Complaining is worthwhile as often it helps staff to understand the difficulties. For instance in the case of the loud music mentioned above, it turned out that the staff were totally unaware of the possibility that disabled people could be in difficulty in their loos.

Problem/praise cards

ITAAL policy is not to complain on your behalf but to support you in making a complaint. It has been suggested that ITAAL produce cards to record problems/congratulate good providers. These could be handed in at the facility in question, with a section to post to ITAAL. This would allow us to monitor the most common complaints as well as highlight places that offer really good facilities. A charge would have to be made for the cards. Please let us know what you think of this idea.

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

AN ACCESSIBLE LOO – TOO MUCH TO ASK?

Sue Maynard Campbell

Managing Director, Equal Ability Ltd.

Equal Ability is a disability equality consultancy that runs training. My staff and I are always ‘marking’ loos out of 10. The other week we had a really bad loo day. I went to a conference – on issues of quality – having enquired beforehand about access, particularly the loo. We arrived shortly after 9am, so it had been an early start. My PA, Kim, went to check out the facilities while I planned my networking strategy. She returned saying she couldn’t find it, so I went to check directions again.

The receptionist responded in a tone that conveyed the impression she thought us stupid not to have found it. "It is the first cubicle in the Ladies - larger than the rest." Kim raised her eyebrows and took me to inspect. Having negotiated a difficult entrance, I rounded the corner and was confronted with a fairly standard-width cubicle. I could just get through the door but then my feet hit the bowl and my back wheels stuck out. No chance of my PA getting in, and certainly no chance of the inward opening door closing. There were handrails – if you can grace flimsy towel rails with that description.

I hauled the conference organiser in to look. She brought the Duty Manager in tow – protesting that he did not go in to the Ladies.... but he did! Promises of change were made and I left without any networking opportunities *and* I now have the hassle of following up to see if they were empty promises.

The same day Gina, our Access Adviser, had a similar experience. We have been searching our area for a venue that meets our standard for running courses – especially access! Gina has visited many venues.... I won't repeat her language on the subject! Suffice it to say that one of the top-rated hotels she visited that day said 'yes' they had a unisex accessible loo. She asked to see it and was shown a door with no signage on it. Then the person with her had to go off and get a screwdriver to open the door! Once open Gina could not resist saying: "Oh it is a storeroom too!" The man was most indignant, but how else do you describe a room full of stacked chairs and tables?!

Our search for a venue continues.....

NEW BRITISH STANDARD and other developments

Sarah Langton-Lockton

BS 8300:2001 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people was published on 31 October 2001. It is based in large part on user trials and

validated desk studies which formed part of research commissioned by the former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (now DTLR), and will gradually supersede current guidance on accessibility.

It contains a wealth of new information on how disabled people interact with the built environment. The dimensions of the unisex accessible WC compartment, for example, now renamed the 'unisex accessible corner WC layout', are larger than the previous conventional wisdom – 1500mm by 2200mm – and there is provision for new vertical grab rails each side of the wash-basin. The recommended height of the WC, to the top of the seat, is 480mm.

BS 8300 will inform the revision of the Part M Approved Document and will become the technical reference for access audits.

Revision of Part M

Part M is being revised to incorporate those aspects of BS 8300 that are controllable through building regulation. It is possible that the revised regulation will apply to alterations. There will be a public consultation on the draft revised Approved Document, probably in March this year, with the likelihood of it coming into force in 2003.

Revised Code of Practice for Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

This was launched on 26 February 2002. The Code of Practice has been revised and extended to cover the duties of service providers to make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of premises that prevent access to services. These duties come into force on 1 October 2004. The Code of Practice can be downloaded from the DRC website www.drc-gb.org.

Making access to goods and services easier for disabled customers: a practical guide for small businesses and other small service providers

This was prepared by CAE and was also launched on 26 February 2002. Full of practical advice for small businesses, the booklet is available from the DRC website or in a range of formats from the DRC Helpline; telephone 08457 622 633; textphone 08457 622 644; fax 08457 778 878; email enquiry@drc-gb.org; or by post from:

DRC Helpline
FREEPOST
MID 02164
Stratford upon Avon
CV37 9BR

THE NATIONAL TRUST WELCOMES VISITORS' VIEWS

Diana Twitchin

A chance moan to the National Trust representative at the summer 2001 BTA council meeting demonstrated that if you take the trouble to air an issue, there can be a positive outcome.

I had been lamenting the loss of a loo at a National Trust property, which I could no longer use because it had been made into a joint accessible/ mums and babies facility. As this had been done within the original limited space allowance it meant that anyone using a wheelchair other than a small manual one would have had great difficulty shutting the door, let alone use the loo. Even a pushchair would have had difficulties.

The outcome of this conversation was a promise that the incoming Access for All Officer would make contact with ITAAL, and that the problem loo would be looked at. Mark Dyer visited us in October, several months into his new and challenging post. As a wheelchair user, Mark already has a hold on the disability issues facing the NT, and an awareness of the problems facing staff and volunteers within the various sites and properties. Impending major changes within the NT also mean that visitors' comments and views will be sought and listened to. The NT already pays a lot of

attention to disabled visitors, but much more could be done to produce inclusive information and ensure that those who need very specific information can get it. As one would expect, the importance of loo facilities featured largely in our discussion. Visitors will not come a second time if loo facilities are a problem. Identifying disabled NT members is one challenge for Mark: so many people are reluctant to admit to any form of disability, and yet will make full use of any specific facilities provided. We ended a very constructive meeting with a promise to keep in touch.

Oh yes that loo. Well it has been inspected and the problem acknowledged. Watch this space!

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

HOISTS IN AWAY-FROM-HOME LOOS

Sharon Woodward

I am sure readers will be aware of the regulations in Part M of the Building Regulations (1998) in relation to access and facilities for disabled people; also Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). While these efforts to make services and goods accessible are welcome, under the new regulations there is no legal obligation to provide hoists. So, as a full-time wheelchair-user who needs a hoist, I will still be unable to use any toilet facility built or converted under the new regulations if it does not have a hoist. Many disabled people face similar exclusion.

I appreciate some of the difficulties surrounding the provision of hoists – for example, the wide range of hoists/slings available and the varying needs arising from different impairments of disabled people - but I feel that the alternative of being

relatively institutionalised at home is not acceptable.

Under the Manual Handling Regulations 1992, my personal assistants are not permitted to lift me without using a hoist. Within my home I have a hoist. I did have transport in which I used a mobile hoist/portalo. However, this was precarious. I was prevented from having a built-in hoist in my new vehicle, so if I want to go out for any length of time I have to know where there is an accessible loo with a hoist. If no such loo is available, I either don't go out or I go out for a short time and go without food or drink. Over time, various solutions have been suggested – some that were genuine attempts to be supportive, some downright insulting.

Talking with Diana Twitchin made me realise that I am not the only woman in this situation. ITAAL want these issues publicised and want to identify other disabled people who face being housebound.

In June 2001 I began a personal campaign for hoists in away-from-home loos. This campaign is so far supported by National Council of Disabled People (NCDP), Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) and Disabled Council for Independent Living) DCIL. Around 3000 people have signed the petition in support of full negotiations between our government and disabled people.

If you would like to know more about my campaign please contact me at 67 Russell Drive, Stapleford, Nottingham, NG9 7EG, or through the ITAAL Newsletter.

NOW PULL THE CHAIN

Tony McTeare (London)

It's about the lavatory....there I've said it. For me some of the worst aspects of my disability are the problems and associated embarrassment, caused by the need to use the loo. I know that everybody needs to

go, and that many others have much greater disabilities than being confined to a wheelchair, but I never seem to have come to terms with it.

Prior to a severe head injury in 1988 I had enjoyed good health and led a very active life, so everything came as a sudden shock, in more ways than one. For the first few weeks in hospital I was in a coma, blissfully unaware of the drama unfolding about me. Then, although I have no memory of it, I slowly began to wake a little and was fed with a spoon. Inevitably this led to the need for a bedpan. My family soon learnt that this was the moment to go for a lengthy coffee break as it took some time. My own first recollection is that it was painful, probably because I had become very thin and did not have much padding. In my innocence about the extent of the damage to my brain, I then decided that if I didn't eat much the toilet could be avoided until I got better. Medical staff soon realised that I was 'not going' and served oily laxative that I promptly poured into a plant pot!

Weeks passed and then I was transferred to another hospital for further rest. What joy, for here I was lifted out of bed and into a wheelchair with a hole in the seat. This was wheeled to the bathroom and positioned over the lav, thereby saving some of my blushes. However, the trouble now was how to use the toilet paper. This incessant concern was exacerbated if the accompanying nurse was one I knew well. I eventually found a way to reach down from the front and use the toilet tissue myself.

At the 6-month stage I was moved to a rehabilitation unit where I was to spend the next year. The building, which has since been demolished, was poorly equipped in several respects, one being the toilets. Their size was adequate but despite this being a rehab set up, there were no bars or aids of any kind. Once again a nurse had to be there. At least I am a man and we come designed with a conveniently placed tap. However, the girls on the unit were reluctant to have a drink after 6pm because

the night nurse team had a reputation for delay.

The next toilet tale concerns my first home visit. The hospital offered the opportunity at very short notice and I said 'yes please' with no planning. Accordingly I was collected in my wheelchair on the Friday evening, to be returned by 7pm Sunday. We had no ground floor cloakroom but I was confident that provided I had the bottle, all would be well. Alas, my plan had not taken lovely home cooking into account and I needed to go upstairs to the loo. To his eternal credit and my undying gratitude, my 17-year-old son, Andrew, together with his pal, carried me up. I am still not sure which of us was the most frightened.

I was a patient in several more hospitals but with very few exceptions the toilet facilities leave much to be desired, as do most public buildings. Many places that display the disabled logo seem to use this extra space for storage.

Strange isn't it that the first question upon receiving any invitation, has to be 'can I get to the lavatory?'

LIFELONG LEARNING

Pearl Stewart

My passion for learning has helped enormously since my right leg was amputated last March - and what a lot there has been to learn in order to gain some measure of independence.

It came as quite a shock to discover how large a part the basic need to use a loo was to play in my new life. However, I was prepared to do anything to dispense with the infernal bedpans I'd needed for over a month and soon learnt to transfer to a commode. Provided it had four locking wheels, the nurses would give me some privacy, but that wasn't enough. I wanted a wheelchair. Only then would I be able to use the en-suite facilities, on my own, whenever I needed to. But it wasn't that easy!

Being newly disabled, I was amazed at the lack of thought in planning the layout of the several loos I used in the hospital, even though they were not designed specifically for disabled people, and it didn't take me long to realise that being born with arms like an orang-utan and shorter legs would have been a distinct advantage. Fortunately I have other useful qualities, like flexibility, being able to pivot easily on my 'old' leg and being slim enough to fit into the smallest wheelchair.

Once at home, though there was no easy way to make it anything but moderately wheelchair friendly, I continued learning. I found that trousers with elasticated waists made using the loo easier - if I could find any long enough - but I had to be careful with skirts. If I got the width wrong, the hem could catch round my stump - not funny when I was in a hurry and had to disentangle myself with my left hand while my right hand was holding me up. In July I got my 'new' leg and started on the next challenge - learning to use it - and in early November I 'graduated'. By then I had learnt how to walk over uneven surfaces, as well as sideways and forwards, but not how to use a loo without a frame or grab rails. However, as my balance improved, and confidence in my abilities grew, I was able to practise on our upstairs loo.

Sadly the homes of our friends and families were still inaccessible. I also became very apprehensive about our daughter's forthcoming wedding in April. It was to take place in her home area, about an hour's drive from here. The reception venue had a suitable loo, but she was to be married from her friend's house, and access there was 'debatable'. More practice was indicated.

Then disaster struck. Early in January my new leg became so uncomfortable I couldn't wear it. My return to good health had led to regaining the weight I had lost. Instead of my stump shrinking, as I had expected, it had got bigger. For the first time in my life I had a weight problem. It took until just after Easter before my prosthetist managed to get

me a leg I could walk and sit down in. Talk about nerve wracking. However, it was during this time that I heard of ITAAL. In the event I did not need to use the directory, but what I learned was both comforting and encouraging. If others could cope so could I.

On April 11th we had a rehearsal of THE DAY and I was able to work out how to do what was needed. That meant that I could relax and enjoy what proved to be a fabulous occasion. It also brought home to me how lucky I am to have the option of wearing my leg when loos are inaccessible from the wheelchair.

Mind you, there's still a lot to learn.

AN UNHEALTHY EXPERIENCE

Hayley Hammon (Berkshire)

In July 2001 I went to see Robbie Williams performing at the Milton Keynes Bowl. From previous enquiries about parking for disabled people I was aware that the venue was basically a bowl-shaped field and there were no permanent facilities. However, I did not anticipate just how bad things would be.

- There were only two loos for about 60 wheelchair users, ambulant disabled people and their companions. The inadequacy of this was demonstrated by the extremely unpleasant state of the loos. Access was not being 'policed' so, although most people did let disabled people go in front of them, every Tom, Dick and Harry who could not be bothered to walk to the main loos was also using them.
- There was no ramp access from the wooden walk/wheel way. I could not get my medium sized wheelchair into the cubicle and shut the door: the door was wide enough, THE cubicle wasn't. So using the loo involved my pregnant best friend having to lift me out of my chair (outside the cubicle) help me into the cubicle and onto the loo. With support, I can stand to transfer and I can walk a little with

crutches – but they were in the car. My companion then had to stay inside while I used the loo. From talking to other people I realise that this is a necessary part of their lives, but its not part of mine yet and it wasn't very pleasant for someone who is used to being very independent. There were two horizontal bars in the cubicle – one on the back of the door, one on the wall. I do not know if they were the right height as I was unable to use them.

- There was no hand basin!!

After this experience we limited our liquid intake for the rest of the evening! Other wheelchair users were also limiting their drinking because of previous experience of attending many such events. Unfortunately down came the rain and in our hurry to leave I forgot to find out who had provided the loos. So I shall never know who had the pleasure of providing us with our 'conveniences', and to whom complaints should be sent.

A POSITIVE PARTNERSHIP

Diana Twitchin

Finding accessible loos in rural areas is a nightmare if you are disabled, particularly if you are a wheelchair user. On holiday in Lincolnshire in September we were desperate for loos and somewhere accessible to lunch. Having been told by the landlord of a rural pub that declared 'Families welcome' - 'Er no loo, or not one you could get into, but I'll give you free coffee!' we faced a 15 minute drive back to the nearest town where we knew there was a loo. On the edge of Billingham village, eagle-eyed sign-reading husband spotted a crossroads sign that said 'Public Loo' , pointing vaguely into the village. There were no other signs but locals knew where it was - at the Golden Cross Pub in Church Street.

Once comfort was restored and a lovely pub lunch on the table, the landlord explained

the set up. The accessible loo and male and female facilities are built inside the pub, but in such a way that they are separate from the pub. They are at the front by the main entrance and are reached through the car park and very attractive pub gardens. The local authority provided financial assistance to build them, and now rents the loos for general public use. The pub maintains them, unlocking them at 8 am and locking them at 11pm.

This is an example of good practice that should be copied elsewhere. It also means we can continue to explore that part of Lincolnshire knowing there is at least one accessible loo available. Apparently the local authority are shy of publicity – hence the one and only signpost at the main road junction with the village. You then have to ask as you go. Still it is one way of meeting the locals!

EQUIPMENT NEWS

The products described below were spotted in the press papers from the European Day of Disabled People 2001. They were both entered in the award category Travel and Leisure of the Breaking Barriers Award – a feature of that day. We would be pleased to hear from anyone who has used the products or has any further information about them.

Travel-kit wee-bag – is a portable, disposable bag for collecting urine. Liquid entering the bag solidified on contact with the bag in about a minute. The bag is particularly useful when there are no toilet facilities available or when facilities are not accessible. Anyone can use the travel kit in conjunction with an oval ring hold. Women can comfortably use the ergo-handle holder in either a sitting or standing position. Women with impaired movement in their hips, pelvis and/or hands will find this holder comfortable to use in a standing

position. Female wheelchair users have also used this holder successfully. For further details contact Pipinette AB, Carola Nilstein, Kampementsgatan 28, S-11538 Stockholm, Sweden.
Tel: +46 8 662 62 28
Fax: +46 8 662 61 78
e-mail carola.nilstein@pipinette.se
website: www.pipinette.se

Design for All Toilet

'Welcome' is a Design for All Toilet designed by Mitzi Bollani. 'Welcome' is suited to the needs of children, adults, elderly people and people with impaired movement or vision and mothers with babies in prams or push chairs. Its combination includes:

- water closet with raised toilet seat, handrail, tip-up handles, toilet paper holders and alarm bell:
- wash-basin at standard height with a facilitated lever:
- smaller and lower water closet and wash-basin.

Welcome is decorated in different colours so that the fittings are clearly recognisable. Wheelchair users can enter the space from the front or the sides.

Contact Information:

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PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

Issue 1 of Privy Counsel prompted many of you to ring or write in with information, views and comments. We have included as many as we can here.

HOISTS IN LOOS

Esther Collington (Derbyshire) asks:

Does anyone else out there long for hoists in accessible public toilets? I certainly do but I only know of one other person who has the same problems. I have two personal assistants who are not allowed to lift me without a hoist. I use a ceiling hoist at home. I am unable to lift myself at all so consequently have problems when leaving home for more than half a day.

The Charity REMAP invented an inflatable cushion in the letter C shape that fits my wheelchair. A compressed air motor pumps up the cushion while I sit on it and a urinal is pushed under me when I am at the correct height. It sounds complicated but is a fairly simple idea. It is not perfect and makes a lot of noise, so we have to choose a toilet that is well away from public areas! It is also a bit 'hit and miss'. If I am not in the right position I tend to have a wet patch for the rest of the day. I am also terrified of pumping it up too much in case it bursts but at least it has enabled me to visit places that are a long way from home.

There must be many disabled people who need hoists in toilets. Does anyone have any ideas?

(Ed: We are asking the REMAP inventor to write about his invention in the next newsletter.)

Kirsty White (Cambridge) contacted us on the same issue. Her partner is able to assist her when out, but when he returns to full-time work she will be relying on personal assistants and they are not allowed to lift without a hoist. Kirsty has to use a moulded cushion that stops her using a female urinal when sitting in her chair.

(Ed: ITAAL are keen to establish just how many disabled people using personal assistants are unable to go out and about because their assistants are not allowed to lift them without a hoist. If you are in this position or know another disabled person who is, please contact us.)

PANTIES

There have been a number of comments about these. It seems the 'no-pants' brigade is growing, and any solutions would be welcome. One lady submitted details of the panties she makes for herself. They are similar to the pants for young children that have poppers over the hips.

LADIES' URINALS

One reader reports that having had to resort to using a hoist at home, it is vital that she finds a urinal she can manage herself, or with a minimum of assistance. Those she has tried are not suitable as she cannot raise herself sufficiently to get them under, or remove them safely when full. In the catalogue from Functional Solutions she has seen a urinal for females with a shaped piece at the front. She is reluctant to spend £20 just to try it out when it may not be suitable. She wonders if anyone else who is totally paralysed below the waist has ever tried it.

RAISED SEATS AND SPLIT SEATS

A reader reports getting her paralysed legs trapped in the dip in the middle of the front of raised loo seats, resulting in her being unable to move back into her chair, and that skirt or pants would get caught under the edge of the split seat and hold her prisoner.

(Ed: Readers will be pleased to know that the new British Standard says that split loo seats should not be fitted in accessible loos.)

DO WE NEED A KEY?

Alma Williams (Yorkshire), whose husband is disabled, bemoans the lack of signposting in advance about whether a key is needed. On three occasions recently she has assisted gentlemen in 'dismay and desperation' outside the accessible loo on Platform 8 at King's Cross by lending them her key. The gents involved did not know where to purchase keys. She reports that in Jersey signposts indicate when a key is needed for the accessible loo. She has raised this point about good signposting to various disability authorities without

success. The only answer seems to be to ensure that you always carry your RADAR key with you.

SHARED FACILITIES

Alma continued:

I am also resentful when facilities for disabled people and for baby-changing are combined. Both sets of customers are in urgent need and neither can afford to wait. There is also some misuse by able-bodied people of facilities for disabled people. There was recent correspondence in one of the national papers, starting with the boast of a person who rejoiced in the space, cleanliness and accessibility of adapted facilities and always used them!

DRUG ABUSE/VANDALISM/SEX??

A disabled man telephoned to report two instances when an accessible loo was broken into by non-disabled people whilst he and his wife were inside. Naturally, he and his wife were very shaken. He believes that in both cases it was for illegal purposes. In one instance the minute he had come out a couple – not disabled - went in. If he is reading this, the Editor hopes he will write these experiences down and let ITAAL have them to pass to the BTA.

HOW FAR TO THE LOO?

Val Carr (Lancashire) - who like everyone has had trouble with accessible loo facilities and has been glad to help with the directory – echoed the above issues and also mentioned "...**the distance one has to 'walk' to get to a toilet on motorway service areas.** I can walk a short distance and would like to save my husband the extra work of unloading my wheelchair, but one can never be sure how far one will have to walk to get to the loos. Then there is the problem of having to retrace one's steps to fetch a key. Perhaps we can campaign to get a notice outside the building to say how far away a toilet is? Recently in a service area, I discovered toilets that were not even indicated. I made my feelings known at the nearest staffed outlet!"

STICKERS FOR COMMENTS?

She ends: Frequently I would like to express my gratitude that toilet facilities are available in public places, but all too often I find I want to add – 'but do you realise there is no room to turn a wheelchair to exit the cubicle?' or 'Hand towels are more efficient and quicker than blow driers when a person can only stand for short periods.' I thought of printing stickers to leave in these places? Would an organised campaign on these lines eventually improve facilities?

LAVATORY BOWL CIRCUMFERENCE AND SEAT WIDTH

Sally O'Connor (London) writes: "My loo at home has a lavatory bowl with a large circumference and a big seat: there is plenty of space for me to shift my weight so that I can wipe my bum and use a catheter on myself. But some of the loos I have come across, mainly in other people's houses but also in public places, are so much smaller and there is no space for a hand, let alone a bum or any weight shifting. I can find it a real problem."

DRINKING (water that is!!)

Sally continued: "' do so agree with Maggi Barwick about liquids. I make a point of drinking two litres of water a day when I am at home. Plenty of peeing but my bowel loves it. Then, as Maggi said, the body can stand a day of reduced liquid. Try it. It takes some getting used to as you feel a bit bloated at first but the outcome is worth it.'

BOWEL PROBLEMS

Kate Alexandra (Manchester) wrote to say how encouraged she was by Maggi's article and to raise concerns about bowel difficulties.

"I wonder how many readers recognise the following problem. 30 years ago I had a severe stroke. I was aware as soon as I was conscious that my bowel function had just stopped. For year I could not get a doctor interested in the problem and I had to manage it myself by dietary changes until eventually my GP prescribed laxative capsules. He continued to prescribe these up until two years ago when they no longer

worked. He then changed the prescription to an enema twice a week. In spite of this I still get blockages. At last I have been referred to a hospital because I now have a prolapse of the bowel.

Doctors have continued to believe that there is no connection between the stroke and the constipation, but then I read the book *Pain, The Science of Suffering* by Patrick Wall describing the digestive process of elephants and how this will stop completely if they are alarmed. It also said that gut paralysis and constipation can cause problems in post operative patients. I would add that it can be a long-term complication after a stroke.

There is a certain satisfaction in being proved right even though this involves being compared to an elephant..... and I still do not have a solution!"

Ed: It would be useful to know what role the Continence Service has in helping solve these problems. The following contact information might be useful.

INCONTACT - Action on Incontinence

Incontact has a network of local user groups and helplines. These can also be a resource for healthcare workers, providing a local referral point for support and self-help. Incontact produces a range of user-friendly booklets, product information sheets and a quarterly magazine - all free to people with continence problems and carers. For further information visit their website www.incontact.org or tele 020 7700 7035 or write to Incontact, United House, North Road, London N7 9DP.

PAMIS (Profound and Multiple Impairment Service)

Those of you who already have the Directory and the Essential Companion will

find mention of PAMIS and its campaign to help those who need to lie flat to have personal care needs met. We are printing information about PAMIS here so that readers can bring it to the attention of anyone who might benefit from its work.

PAMIS is a UK wide voluntary organisation, concerned with profound and multiple learning disability. Families caring for people with this degree of disability have a huge task and a right to as much support as can be offered. PAMIS aims to provide them with up-to-date information and practical help on all aspects of care, therapy, rights and entitlements.

The majority of accessible loos for disabled people do not have sufficient space to include an adult-sized changing table. The lack of such changing facilities in accessible toilets is one of the most restrictive practical problems faced by families caring for someone who is incontinent. They describe having to change their daughter or son on toilet floors. Not only is this undignified and unhygienic, it also involves heavy lifting with the potential risk of serious damage to a carer's back. So, many families stay at home rather than risk this type of situation.

PAMIS campaigns for

- Accessible loos with enough space for two carers, non-standard wheelchairs and a free-standing couch
- a height adjustable changing couch either free-standing plinth/couch that is raised and lowered, the preferred choice or folding type, mounted on a wall, which hangs flat when not in use, for use in very confined space
- wide tear-off paper roll to cover couch and large waste bin for disposable pads.

PAMIS aims to:

- promote inclusion
- halt discrimination
- safeguard respect and dignity
- ensure the health and safety of both user and carer

For further information contact PAMIS,
White Top Research Unit, Frankland
Building,
The University, Dundee DD1 4HN.
Tel 01382 345134 Fax: 01382 227464
e-mail: pamis@socialwork.dundee.ac.uk.

BRITISH TOILET ASSOCIATION UPDATE

Clara Greed

Reader, Faculty of the Built Environment,
University of the West of England, Bristol.

The BTA Annual Conference took place at Stratford-upon-Avon in May – a gathering of 200 people, predominantly providers – and included delegates from Moscow Toilet Association, South Africa, Scandinavia and Singapore.

The BTA Council meeting followed on 25-26 June hosted by Wychavon District Council in Pershore. The two-day session began with an arranged tour of the public toilets in Evesham. They had tried really hard to provide a range of toilet facilities for everyone, and the toilets were remarkably clean. However 'the devil is in the detail' and some problems with the adapted toilet facilities were noted, such as grab rails installed upside down, emergency pull cords tied up by the cleaners meaning that no-one could reach them, and a hook on the back of a door which was high even for non-disabled people.

Even in this 'toilet heaven' male toilet provision still exceeded that for women in terms of actual 'places to pee' (cubicles and urinals) although the difference was far less than in some places. I was also concerned about the space around the toilet blocks: attention must be given to access, siting of railings, steps and other street furniture. And why do most councils still put all the recycling bins and bottle banks right next to the toilets. This sends out the clear message, 'toilets are rubbish too' thus

creating an environment conducive to vandalism. Not that there was much vandalism in Evesham, where signs supervise the activities of the population all over the town, saying, for example, 'Alcohol Free Zone' and 'please put your chewing gum in the bin'. I had not seen the like of this since my trip to Singapore last November (to the World Toilet Conference) where social control is very strong.

The committee meeting followed the next day with an update on BTA's current progress and future plans, including how important it is for BTA to include both user and provider group representatives. It was announced that the 2005 World Toilet Conference is to be held in the UK.

In reviewing my attendance at both these events I feel there are potential problems that need to be addressed.

- More women need to be involved as well as representatives from special needs groups.
- Access issues within toilet facilities should be given as high a priority as are hygiene and appearance.
- I am particularly concerned about the installation of male-only street urinals. Local authorities are having to fight street urination, diverting money that could have been spent on better facilities for all. Funding facilities that condone and effectively reward the behaviour of one small group in society (young males) does not seem to me to be building good toilet habits and policy for the future.
- Other groups such as Joint Mobility Unit have criticised the under-provision of toilet facilities for everyone (including especially disabled people and women) in the new 'evening economy' of the 24-hour city too. This has huge worrying social and cultural implications sending out negative messages that cancel out attempts to create more accessible, socially inclusive cities for all.

All these issues point up the need for greater involvement and representation of the views of user groups at meetings to support the movement. BTA meetings take place in small market towns, with caring councils hosting the event that includes an overnight stay in a local hotel. The sheer logistics of travelling, staying at a hotel and being fairly mobile may be a reason why far more provider representatives (manufacturers, local authorities) than members of user groups (charities and campaigners) attend.

There is urgent need to give a greater attention to the social, physical and cultural context of toilet provision, not least in terms of who benefits and who loses out, and whether people can get to the toilets in the first place. In fact the two issues run in parallel, many cannot use public toilets because of poor access and many would-be user group representatives cannot get to the BTA conferences because of lack of funding, inaccessible facilities and time constraints.

The next Council meeting will take place in London, hosted by Westminster City Council. This is to be welcomed. London is more central and hopefully we will see a wider range of toilet locations in much more socially challenging situations.

FROM THE ITAAL OFFICE

ESSENTIAL COMPANION SALES

ITAAL are delighted to announce that the **Employers Forum on Disability**, with financial support from RAILTRACK have purchased 500 copies of the Companion to circulate to their members. Several companies who are listed in the Directory are Forum members.

The **British Toilet Association** also purchased 500 copies for their members who include local authorities, and a range of companies in the sanitation business. ITAAL are grateful to the Forum and BTA for this very practical support.

Feedback on the Companion indicates a need for greater awareness amongst loo providers of the importance of the positioning of fittings within accessible loos, as well as understanding different customer group requirements.

If you want bulk copies of the Companion for circulation please contact the ITAAL office for details of costs.

REGIONAL PUBLICITY

Firstly, thank you to **Miss Gillian Combes** of Chichester, who has been involved with ITAAL since it began. She acts as ITAAL's eyes and ears in her area, and regularly sends in information about relevant local events and contacts for us to follow up. Recently she reported on a local TV programme that looked at Disabled Access in Winchester – but made no mention of accessible loos. We wrote to the programme's producer and got a positive response to the effect that they would try and follow this issue up. In January she reported on the 'loo war' that had broken out between local residents and the local authority because of public loo closures that the local paper was featuring in its Letters section. The paper printed a letter from ITAAL as a result of which we picked up new supporters including Pearl Stewart who has an article in this issue.

A lady from Merseyside wrote to say that she wanted more loos featured in the Directory and more about loos in 'The North'. ITAAL entirely agree - and so – another appeal – we want to hear about accessible loo issues all over the country, good as well as bad things. You don't need to write a long letter, just pop information sheets, newspaper cuttings, names and addresses of useful contacts

into an envelope making sure that your name and address is included. If you are travelling and find a good loo such as the one in Billingham (see page 10), then send us details. This ensures that good practice gets circulated.

We will always acknowledge and tell you about any action we take from this office and send you copies of any letters that go out.

ITAAL TRUSTEES

Dr Monnica C Stewart is a retired physician, who spent most of her professional life in geriatric medicine, and particularly rehabilitation of elderly people. Latterly she was involved in adult community medicine and the problems of younger physically disabled people and those with learning difficulties. She was Chair of the Living Options Group of the Princes of Wales Advisory Committee on Disability. She is currently involved with a number of voluntary organisations, nationally and locally in West Berkshire, mostly concerned with disability and rehabilitation.

Early exposure to the inadequacies of hospital lavatories and the effect these had on patients' progress, helped to develop her interest in the subject of continence. She was a member of the Clothing and Incontinence Panels of the Disabled Living Foundation, subsequently a Trustee and Vice Chairman of the DLF. She was a founder member of the Association for Continence Advice (one of its first 3 Honorary Life Members) and The Continence Foundation.

Joining All Mod Cons - forerunner to the British Toilet Association – brought her into contact with Susan Cunningham the founder, first women member of the British Standard Authority and campaigner on women's problems in away-from-home toilets. Monnica continues as an honorary member of the British Toilet Association and its Council and represents ITAAL views.

Many years ago a medical social worker in Monnica's geriatric team coined the aphorism *'that life is lived at the lavatory level'*. Monnica feels that this is still the case.

MONEY MATTERS

Fund-raising is a major problem for small organisations, and here at ITAAL it is proving very difficult. We suspect this is due in part to the fact that we are dealing with what is still treated as a taboo subject - loos. It has been a depressing ten months for ITAAL with three major applications for funding being turned down. It is therefore a great relief to be able to report that Lloyds TSB have given us core funding for 2002/3 and funds to begin work on the second edition. A condition of the funding is that we find an Editor for the Welsh section. Thank you Lloyds TSB.

Can you help us!

ITAAL still needs money. We urgently need to build up reserves so that we have sufficient 'cashflow' to enable us to carry on the work, for example, when application outcomes are delayed. The Trustees wish to make it clear that administrative costs are kept to a minimum. No-one is paid. All workers are volunteers and all expenditure is carefully scrutinised.

Over the next few months applications will continue to be made to grant-giving trusts, but the Trustees would be grateful for any financial help that readers can bring in. Below are some suggestions. We wait hopefully to hear from you.

ITAAL FRIENDS

Would you be prepared to become an ITAAL Friend and commit yourself to raising £100 a year for ITAAL? 10 such supporters would bring in £1000 – 40 - £4000 – the minimum annual costs for ITAAL. £100 could be raised in a variety of simple ways such as:

- An accessible loo treasure hunt
- An accessible loo pub lunch
- A £1 forfeit swear box or bottle

- A 'promises' auction
- A joint function of your choice with a local organisation sharing profits
- An 'Inuendo' Scrabble Evening, all words have to be connected with the sanitation world!! You may have to censor some!!
- London Marathon 2003 – is there anyone out there planning to run who would run for ITAAL?
- A sponsored team could run pushing a model of the ITAAL logo with the Sumo trying to break down the loo wall! Any takers?
- Is there a brave wheelchair user willing to 'run' the marathon riding a loo bowl? 'Hey Ho Silver!!'
- How about a 'Changing Rooms' accessible loo decorating competition?

These are just some ideas – I suspect readers could dream up many other loo themes for money raising activities. Forgive the concentration on loo themes, it is just that whenever anyone at the ITAAL office starts talking about fund raising the 'tone' of the conversation seems to fall. When filming for a TV programme 18 months ago the entire film crew, producer and presenter kept up a running commentary between takes on words with 'loo' connotations. We would have done better to film their efforts!!

If you would like to become an ITAAL Friend or set up a local ITAAL Friends group please let the ITAAL office know. We can supply information about ITAAL and answer any queries.

Advertising Future issues will carry advertisements, and it is hoped that firms will come forward to sponsor the newsletter. If you are interested in advertising or would like to sponsor Privy Counsel please contact the editor.

SECOND EDITION – PREPARATORY WORK

BE A LOO CHAMP!

East Midlands
Eastern
London
Merseyside and North West
South East
South West
Yorkshire, North East & Humberside

ITAAL is seeking volunteer regional loo champions to help update existing directory entries as well as increase the number of loo entries per region.

If you would like to be a volunteer regional loo champion please contact the ITAAL office for more information. The work will commence in 2003 (or whenever funding becomes available). Out of pocket expenses will be paid. ITAAL has an equal opportunities policy and uses distance working practices.

Closing date - November 30, 2002

Scotland and Northern Ireland

Contacts are being sought in Scotland and Northern Ireland to include accessible loos in these countries. ITAAL already has some contacts on file, but hopes that readers will pass this newsletter to friends in Northern Ireland or Scotland and ask them to contact the ITAAL office if they are interested in helping with information on accessible loos for the second edition of the Directory.

Editor for Wales

ITAAL are seeking a volunteer editor for the Welsh section of the second edition of the Directory of Accessible loos.

The Editor for Wales should ideally be a disabled person, in sympathy with the aims and objectives of ITAAL and understand issues about accessible loos and personal care needs. S/he will need to encourage and support volunteer contributors, initiate contacts with a range of companies in Wales, be computer literate, able to work to deadlines and have an eye for detail.

The post is a voluntary one, and is expected to last for two years. Out of pocket expenses will be paid.

If you are interested please contact ITAAL office for further information. ITAAL has an equal opportunities policy and uses distance working practices. Please don't let worries about your physical ability to cope stop you coming forward.

Closing date November 2002.

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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ITAAL.

**Next Issue Privy Counsel
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170 Benton Hill, Wakefield Road,
Horbury, W Yorks WF4 5HW**

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Price £10.00
Donation towards UK p&p (it's big) £4.50**

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STAFF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

ARE YOU TOILET TRAINED?

Are you developing, commissioning or otherwise involved with the provision of toilets and related facilities?

Do you or your staff need greater understanding of the access needs of those using them, particularly disabled people?

Then **Are You Toilet Trained?** is the course for you.

More and more disabled people are living in the community and expecting to be included in all aspects of life. But everybody is different, and disabled people are no exception. For those not well versed in the issues, it can be very difficult or confusing when trying to make oneself more aware of what is needed.

Are You Toilet Trained? – a one day course - has been designed taking account of the increased emphasis on quality and best value, key training issues for organisations wanting to provide good, customer focused services, and for those commissioning and funding facilities.

Who should attend? anyone with a responsibility for toilet facilities whether in local government, tourism and leisure, the NHS, education or even as an employer.

The course is delivered by the EQUAL Ability Group in association with ITAAL, a donation being made to ITAAL from each course fee received.

For further information and bookings contact

EQUAL ABILITY GROUP 170 Benton Hill, Wakefield Road, Horbury WF4 5HW

Email admin@equalability.ltd.uk

Tel 01924-270335

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