



Privy Counsel

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CONTENTS

2 Editorial

VIEWPOINT

2 DDA – a Victory or Waterloo?
Gerald Reilly

ITAAL IN ACTION

4 Proposals for amending Part M
'Potty Parity'
Local authority loo closures

5 The ITAAL Directory – second edition

6 Purchaser survey results

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

9 A Portable Solution
David Thompson

'NO LIFTING' BANS

10 DRC reports on Court decision

12 Personal independence v. professional
decree

14 IBS Network

14 Accessible Property Register

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

15 Mobility Roadshow seeks ideal
accessible loo
Jan Gethings

FROM THE ITAAL OFFICE

17 ITAAL Trustees
Money Matters

19 A Soliloquy to the Flush

**ITAAL website is up and
running**

Please visit on

www.itaal.org.uk

and let us have your

comments.

STOP PRESS

**Are you going to the Mobility
Roadshow at Donnington,
Derby on 12 or 13 June?**

**If so come and say hallo to
Diana and Bob Twitchin, who
will be helping out on the APT
(Aviation for Paraplegics and
Tetraplegics) exhibition stall.
APT have generously allowed
ITAAL to put information on
their stall.**

**You could discuss loos and
possibly discover a new hobby
– Microlight Flying -**

EDITORIAL

We begin with news about the second UK edition of the directory. Sadly the logistics of producing a book that one can pop into a bag when going out have proved impossible. Instead, the second edition will be part of our website. This will make it much easier to include a lot more information on loos and will also allow us to update the database regularly. A Helpline will be set up in the ITAAL office for those who do not have access to a personal computer. See page 5 for full details.

The Purchaser Survey brought in valuable information on how disabled people plan when going out, giving further insights into disability management. In a Personal Perspective David Thompson talks very openly about the problems he and his wife had to overcome to maintain the quality of life they wanted.

The High Court ruling on manual handling will be of interest to all ITAAL supporters. We print the DRC press release in full and an account of how this issue has adversely affected one person's life.

A news section gives details of issues ITAAL has taken action on over the last six months. We need your help concerning local authority public convenience closures. Gerald Reilly, Access Officer for Cambridge C.C., takes a look at the progress of DDA and planning issues, and we report on the Mobility Roadshow portable loo design.

Again, we will welcome your comments and experiences on this and any other issue featured in the newsletter. They are all useful to pass on to the people concerned and in our own lobbying efforts.

VIEWPOINT

DDA - Victory or Waterloo?

Gerald Reilly

Access Officer, Cambridge C.C.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) does not require anybody to provide a service. But, given that a body or thing has decided to provide a service for the public, this Act seeks to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from that service, whether or not, it is paid for directly or free at point of delivery.

Nobody wants to provide toilets for the public but the current level of civilisation, under the guise of environmental health, ensures that toilets for use by the public are usually available in those places frequented by the public. This falls upon local authorities to deliver.

Toilets are a service

Since October 1999, The DDA has required that where the physical features of a building make a service impossible or unreasonably difficult to use then the service must be provided by a reasonable alternative means. It is not too clear how this can be applied when the service is a toilet. If toilets are provided for the public as a service, it would seem that they should be usable by all, including wheelchair users. The time is right but what about the space?

Until recently, the standard for an accessible toilet was based upon BS5810 1979, providing space and an internal layout perceived to be ergonomically appropriate for independent use of the facility.

It could be argued that if a public toilet does not include such a facility, there may be a DDA consideration. See what the DRC says. Of course this does not only apply to local authority provided facilities, which is a small proportion of the total, but to the private sector providers of such facilities:- pubs, clubs, shopping malls, transport interchanges and any other places to which the public are invited as users of goods, facilities and services.

However, returning to the earlier suggestion that nobody wants to provide toilets for the public how can we ensure that accessible toilets will become increasingly available? Every day, thousands of planning applications are approved for new and altered public buildings and for changes of their use. Access is material to planning. Therefore local planning authorities should ensure that whenever permission is given for the construction and alteration of a building, that permission is conditional on access to and within the building and access to use of the building's facilities - and that includes accessible toilets.

New planning guidance

We await new planning guidance from the ODPM and the publication of a revised Part M of the Building Regulations. Both documents will put increasing onus on local authorities to ensure that only an inclusive built environment will be constructed. That will be serious progress with the additional benefit that the new Part M is based upon BS8300, a replacement for BS5810, requiring a cubicle size of 2200mm, 10% longer, really necessary and useful space.

However, it must not be assumed that all this will just happen by itself. There is an essential role for local access groups and other disability activists to ensure that their local planning department is

delivering the DDA! This can be achieved by checking local planning policies, local supplementary planning guidance and making sure that there is an access officer employed by the council to require developers' compliance.

Using Public Entertainment Licences

But lots of places to which the public are invited may not be planning any building works. If these places require Public Entertainment Licences then the local authority's Environmental Health Department could ask for accessible facilities as a licence condition at annual renewal. This would be a helpful introduction to the DDA for the licensee.

New DDA requirements

In October 2004 the DDA will require that where the physical features of a building make a service either impossible or unreasonably difficult to use then that feature must be removed, altered or avoided. A toilet is a service and the Act will require access by all to its use. As providers of public toilets, local authorities should welcome these new requirements as an opportunity to ensure that their facilities are accessible. Surely there is no valid reason to remove standard provision as a way of avoiding the provision of accessible facilities. Likewise, it will be for local authorities through planning, building control and environmental health, having led by example, to ensure that private sector provision meets the challenge of the DDA.

ITAAL IN ACTION

Proposals for Amending Part M – Access to and Use of Buildings (Nov 2002)

ITAAL commented on the Sanitary Provision section of this consultative document. The Editor is indebted to the Centre for Accessible Environments for the opportunity to attend one of the consultative workshops. Copies of our response are available from the office. (Please include £2.50 to cover the cost of photocopying and postage.)

‘Potty Parity’ (equal provision of toilet facilities) – revision of British Standard BS 6465

A consultative document on a review of this standard will be available later in 2003. ITAAL will be responding.

The following quote from the Environmental Engineering Centre’s letter seeking responses, explains the intention of the standard.

‘Although it is widely acknowledged that male and female users should be provided with similar levels of provision of adequate facilities, often known as ‘potty parity’, the determination of actual numbers of appliances is not straightforward. There are various ways in which equality can be measured:

- *Equal numbers of appliances (loos – male and female)*
- *Equal waiting periods in queues*
- *Equal area of facilities*

Also, toilet facilities are usually subject to wide variations in levels of use throughout the day or event. For example, at a sports stadium, use will be concentrated during breaks in play and a women’s hockey championship match would probably attract a much higher proportion

of ladies than a rugby match. If urinals were not specified and only WCs were installed, moveable walls could be used to change the proportion of facilities. However, this would require regular effort by the building’s staff and a larger floor area for the Gents. Another solution would be an increase in the use of unisex facilities.’

Local authority loo closures

We have been receiving disturbing information regarding the closure of local authority public conveniences and its effect on communities. Vandalism, social misuse and the continuous cost of repairs and equipment replacement give local authorities a reason to close their facilities. Interestingly most people are not aware that there is no legal obligation on LAs to provide public toilets.

The British Toilet Association confirms that this closure pattern is continuing at a steady rate of around 5% each year and there are indications that it may increase. Whilst the condition of toilets that remain open is often inadequate, the reasons given for closure show little concern for the needs of the communities they serve.

ITAAL is particularly concerned that the closure of public toilets is having a profound impact in areas where no other accessible facilities are available e.g. shops, restaurants or pubs. Customer toilets are becoming more readily available in business premises, but they are only available during opening hours. The signs ‘There Are No Customer Toilets in This Store’ or ‘Toilets for Customers’ Use Only’ are increasingly common.

We are in discussion with INCONTACT and other groups on this issue. It will greatly help us to hear from you about any public convenience closures in your area and resulting local reaction.

THE ITAAL DIRECTORY - second edition

Our Trustees have considered four options for producing the second UK edition. Preparatory work over the past six months identified issues we had to face before a funding application could be prepared.

In Oct/Nov 2002 we did a Purchaser Survey. Respondents confirmed the need for a directory but wanted more loos listed, and were concerned about the weight of the existing book and how it is set out (see page 6 for their responses).

Other issues raised were:

- Many disabled people are not major travellers, but a minority are and want national information.
- Some people – disabled and non-disabled - have questioned the cost of the Directory.
- The lack of understanding as to why disabled people want detailed loo information. Survey results do show how much information some disabled people need if they are going out.
- Adult changing table facilities must be included in the next edition.
- People who use portable hoists need specific space information about loos.
- There is a need to look at how the loo database is updated and how often.
- How could loo information be made available to foreign disabled tourists?

We reviewed the work done to prepare the first directory, including the role that volunteers played and the difficulty of attracting funding. Four options were identified for producing the second edition: –

1. Continue as with the first edition, producing a UK book version and a CD Rom to help, in particular, people with sight difficulties.
2. Drop the book directory and move to a CD Rom, to be sold to individuals and organisations.
3. Drop the book directory, put all the information onto the ITAAL website and put a Help line into the ITAAL office.
4. Put information onto the website and produce a reduced information book directory.

In considering the four options the Trustees were very aware that when the ITAAL project was set up by a group of disabled women – all wheelchair users – they wanted to bring spontaneity back into travel and felt a ‘a book of loos’ would do this. While a number of disabled people have been very enthusiastic about the directory they have also said they want **more** loos listed. So, was it fair to just drop the production of a ‘book of loos’?

It was decided reluctantly that if the directory were to be increased in size then producing it in book form would not be feasible. As one Trustee put it ‘you would need a trolley to carry it with you when out!’ Other concerns included the need to have a continuous updating process for the database; to ensure that disabled people continued to ‘own’ the work; and worries about attracting funding.

The Trustees have unanimously opted for Option 3. The second UK edition will be produced as a database on the ITAAL website. A help line will be put into the ITAAL office to ensure that people without access to a computer can also get information quickly. We will also investigate the possibility of publishing some information - such as

national or regional maps - with selected loos with good facilities.

Privy Counsel will keep you informed of progress. **See second edition insert for the help ITAAL needs from you now.**

PURCHASER SURVEY RESULTS

In October 2002 we sent a survey out to 50 buyers – individuals not organisations or businesses. They were selected at random and from a wide geographical area. 25 (50%) forms were returned.

The following is a summary of the results. We give the answers in considerable detail as they demonstrate the amount and range of information people need to research. Some respondents did not answer all the questions.

Usefulness of Directory

10 very useful
9 useful
4 not useful

what would make it more useful?

- better organisation of entries
- more portable/less heavy
- more complete entries
- exact loo bowl heights
- loose key to symbols

Regions most used

Most people gave multiple answers here. The responses showed an even spread across all regions.

How easy is Directory to use?

5 very easy to use
14 easy to use
3 hard to use

What would make it easier?

- loose key to symbols
- separate regional books
- better organisation of entries
- counties in alphabetical order
- more portable format
- less symbols

Detail on loos

17 just right
2 too much
3 not enough

What should be left out?

- simplify categories – too confusing

What added?

- sources of commode hire for holidays
- full information - too many loos just had ? mark
- exact height of loo bowl

What information were you seeking when you bought the directory?

Respondents ticked more than 1 box
10 local information
8 regional “
19 national information

Would it help you if directory was published in regional sections?

13 yes
8 no

YES - *publish as regional books*

- makes it portable, easier to use
- just take section you need
- if in urgent need of loo easier to find one in regional section
- easy to keep in car and handle with arthritic hands
- less time needed to find towns

NO - *do not publish as regional books*

- you would never have the right section with you
- would need several sections for long trips

- present book too big – could it be made loose leaf.
- one quick easy reference book is preferable

Cost

1 too expensive

19 just right

2 should be free

:: respondents recognised that those on low incomes would find cost high

Have you recommended directory to others?

14 yes 9 no

Have you used Essential Companion?

7 yes 16 no

Have you recommended Essential Companion?

5 yes 17 no

Rating the directory (5 excellent, 1 very disappointing)

5 4 3 2 1

7 9 2 3 2

Rating Essential Companion

5 4 3 2 1

5 4 3 4 1

Additional information

This included asking respondents how much time they spent researching information before leaving the house and covered various aspects of life.

Travelling on business

Whenever I go away

Half a day when I am travelling for work

Using the health service

5-10 minutes (2)

I assume they have one!

I spend a lot of time asking

I know local services

Having a day out

5-10 minutes (1)

10 minutes (3)

15 minutes (3)

15-20 minutes (1)

15-30 mins phoning/book research (1)

30 minutes (2)

half to 1 hour (1)

I know most local places

I search days ahead

I use the loo I know

Going on holiday - travelling there

30-45 minutes (4)

15-20 minutes (2)

10-15 minutes (1)

20 minutes (1)

2 hours (1)

I assume motorway services okay

I keep Directory with me

I use service stations/5mins phoning

I search over weeks

I spend at least 1 hour(phoning & letters)

I use supermarkets/restaurants but do some searching

I search for school activities/visits and spend approx 15 mins, 30 mins or longer on residential trips

I only go somewhere we know

In holiday area

5-10 minutes (2)

15 mins (2)

20 minutes (1)

30 minutes (4)

2-3 hours (1)

15-30 minutes total over holiday(1)

I ask in detail beforehand

I use service stations/5 mins phoning several days

I tried contacting a tourist board, information sent virtually useless

Socialising locally

10 minutes (1)

half to 1 hour (1)

I go before leaving home!

I know my local area

I go on regular outings and known

situations do not need much research
I already know where loos are
I spend an hour searching when special
visit planned, to find out if I can book for
dinner.

Other

10-15 minutes (2)
1 hr when trying to arrange a special visit
I ask beforehand

**Essential information needed before
leaving home**

14 responded in detail

- . Exact location/opening hours/RADAR
key/height/transfer/grab rails/parking/hot
water
- . What facilities available/will they be
open/alternatives in case of problems.
- . How high toilet bowl is/how accessible
- . Rely on supermarkets or department
stores that usually have a café & toilets
need to know where loo is/if it is
open/how much will it cost
- . Able to park near in wide space or
wheelchair from car/on an even surface
not up a slope.
- . Availability and level (access)
- . Availability/parking nearby/space in
loo/height of loo/sink/accessibility
charges/hours of opening.
- . Location/ease parking/type of loo –
unisex/fittings/area
- . Space/size/accessible for power chair &
carer/parking/opening times/how to get
there/sep loo where possible/female carer
with adult male wheelchair user
- . Space for oblique transfer from
wheelchair/loo minimum recommended
height 450 – prefer higher/bars each side
- . Flat entrance/power chair/have leg
supported horizontally, which means
need a lot of space- cannot cope with loo
enclosed with iron railings or bars/need
parking
- . Location and distance
- . Parking/height of loo/size of cubicle –
husband and wife both wheelchair users

Details of respondents

Permanent wheelchair user	
With PA/Carer	5
Independent	5
With PA & independent	2
Occasional wheelchair user	2
Walking with other mobility aids – crutches/sticks/frame with carer	3 1
Parent/Carer of disabled child/teenager	1 1
Personal assistant (employed)	1
Carer (informal) of disabled adult	1 1
Organisation officer	1
Head Special School	1
Non disabled person	1
1 respondent did not declare details	1

Additional comments

- . Could directory be put on internet?
- . The directory has helped a great deal.
- . Situation is changing yearly which
makes it difficult to publish up-to-date
guide.
- . Husband wheelchair user, wife has
irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- . Can manage alone at home where
fittings ideal – rare when out.

We are very grateful to everyone who
took part in the survey and for the time
they spent on it. We are already using
this feedback to inform the second UK
edition.

The detailed information from
respondents on the time they spend
researching the exact information they
need about loos before leaving home,
strengthens and supports our efforts to
make loo providers more aware of the
importance of giving accurate information
when advertising their facilities. It also
challenges those - both disabled and non
disabled, and very often male! - who do

not see the importance of accurate information about the interior layout of accessible loos.

ITAAL are grateful to Sue Maynard Campbell at EQUAL ABILITY for her help in devising the Purchaser Survey form.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A PORTALOO SOLUTION

David Thompson

I found many of the articles in Issue 2 of Privy Counsel very relevant to my own experiences as a carer looking after my wife who suffered a severe stroke in 1989. She spent seven months in hospital which gave me a lot of time to consider the future, and adapt our home to suit a new way of life together determined to carry on as normally as possible.

The loo problem seemed to hold centre stage. However we found a solution that I want to pass on as it really has taken away many of the anxieties we initially experienced. Whenever we go on a journey or on holiday we take the Portaloo, or to give it its official name the Thetford (Norfolk) Porta Potti 245. We have now had it for more than 10 years and, for those not familiar with this object, it is a modern chemical toilet with an in-built flushing system and is usually associated with caravans, camping and sailing boats. There are three sizes. The smallest is not high enough to be of practical use for a disabled person, and the tallest too large and heavy to be conveniently carried in a car; but the medium is ideal. When the need arises we look for a farm track - somewhere with a little privacy - set up the loo beside the car door, and within a short time, we are

on our way again. We bought a blue cube-shaped cover that has handles to disguise the object! We took it to South Africa on a touring holiday and 'pit stops' became the norm. It went on safari and came back to the UK with an ostrich egg inside the bowl! I thoroughly recommend this solution as it can also be used in a B&B. or hotel situation, even in a friend's house.

The problems lie, as your contributors point out, within our towns and cities. Accessible public toilets, almost without exception, have little council priority for their maintenance and inevitably smell, are insecure, ill lit and poorly designed. The high metal Unisex loos, without seats, may be vandal proof, but are a disgrace and more suited to the farmyard!

Even toilets that are meant to conform to recognised standards fail because some idiot places the toilet roll or emergency cord out of reach! How many times have we been in a toilet where there is an assumption that the client will always transfer from wheelchair to bowl from one direction only? Sharing a toilet with mothers who need to change nappies inevitably means that yet another waste bin takes up valuable floor space. Even 'posh' hotels are not exempt.

I have become an expert and have learned that time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted. The plusher the powder room the smaller the cubicles. Luckily my wife can walk a short distance on my arm but needs my help inside the loo. There are some loos where it is almost impossible to close the door with two inside whilst trying not to smash the paper dispenser. Perhaps some day the airline manufacturers, particularly on long-haul flights, will design a disabled loo where the carer does not have to stand in the open door whilst his partner performs.

I get the feeling that hotels and B.& Bs are very reluctant to advertise facilities for disabled people unless they have the full range of aids in their toilets. Very many disabled persons can cope safely so long as there is space within a bathroom to get to the toilet bowl and washbasin.

The older public houses very seldom have loos that are readily accessible to a disabled client. Coaching holidays are out of the question. Rail travel facilities are much better as long as you book ahead - and as long as you can remove the bicycle from the loo first! Ferries are excellent although we would not like to be trapped in the channel tunnel for long.

Researching suitable places to stay takes time and many of the annual publications are not very helpful although tourist office staff usually have some useful information to hand.

Finally, I find it disturbing as a member of our local Access Group, that little attention has been given to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. British Standards have been agreed and codes of practice published, but planning authorities seem reluctant to enforce these rules. The sheer lack of common sense and imagination by architects and builders, who still stick to outdated formulae for fear of infringing listed building regulations etc, is mind boggling. New homes are being built today without level access at the front door.

In the UK councils are putting in dropped curbs, and those with bumps to help people with sensory disabilities. Good – slow progress is being made and we are way ahead of some European countries we have experienced, France in particular. No doubt cobbled streets are very attractive but hell for the wheelchair user and not much better for elders. A level strip down one side would not

detract from the beauty of the surroundings.

When we enquired at the tourist office in Bergen, Norway, about the location of the city's accessible toilets, they were all underground down flights of steps! The hotels were more helpful but one was then obliged to pay for an expensive cup of coffee.

'NO LIFTING' BANS

DRC reports on Court decision

The following press release was issued by the DRC on 18th February 2003. They pointed out that because of reporting restrictions, no names other than the local authority could be used.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has heralded a landmark High Court ruling today that should end restrictive local authority blanket bans which refuse to allow care workers to manually lift any disabled or older person from their bath or bed as a "humanitarian victory for common sense".

The blanket bans stem from the over reliance by local authorities on health and safety guidance by the Royal College of Nursing [1], which was introduced to protect nurses from injury from lifting heavy patients on hospital wards. Delivering his judgement at the High Court today, the Honourable Justice Munby declared that the RCN guidance "is not necessarily an entirely safe guide" and that guidance by the Health and Safety Executive [2] is the most "relevant" to home care situations and the "appropriate" guide, which takes account of disabled people's human rights to dignity, freedom and independence. The

DRC [3], which intervened in the judicial review to give evidence, is aware of similar type of blanket bans in other local authorities.

The judgement was prompted by the case of two severely disabled women, named as 'A' and 'B', marked the end of a five year battle against East Sussex County Council after it introduced a blanket ban on care workers not to manually lift any disabled or older person. Other equipment, such as hoists, were used but caused pain and the two women asked to be lifted manually, which was refused as it was deemed too 'hazardous' for the care workers. As a result their care package broke down and the parents of 'A' and 'B' were left to do all the lifting, with disregard to their own physical health.

The court emphasised the need for a balanced approach to the rights of the disabled person and the rights of workers to be protected by health and safety regulations. But the imposing of a blanket ban on manual lifts represented a "no risk" regime rather than seeking to offer independence and dignity to disabled people and minimising any risk to workers.

The court found that: "There may be situations where some manual handling is an inherent feature in what the employee is employed to do." The judge went on to say: "... in the present case, in my judgement, some manual handling is on any view an inherent - and inescapable - feature of the very task for which those who care for A and B are employed".

Bert Massie, Chairman of the DRC, said: *"This is a clear victory for thousands of disabled people who have been denied their most basic of human rights. There is an obvious need for care workers not to be put at risk of injury in their jobs but this*

must be balanced with disabled people's independence and quality of life. Blanket bans on lifting all disabled people in the home have had a huge detrimental impact and we urge all local authorities to stop such practices and use Health and Safety guidance that put disabled people's needs back at the heart of the care system."

In the case of routine lifts within the home it is "likely to be unlawful" for A and B's carers to:

- Allow them to remain sitting in the bath for any really appreciable time without lifting them out
- Leave them to sit on the lavatory for a long time
- Leave them in a chair or elsewhere with the risk that bedsores will develop
- Fail to pick them up if they fall and remain lying - particularly in a public place
- Leave them sitting in bodily waste for any appreciable time.

The judge made clear that there may be some instances where lifting a disabled person may not be "reasonably practicable", but that consideration should not be made without a thorough risk assessment taking into account the impact on the disabled person, their wishes and feelings and their human rights.

Notes to editors

- Most of the problems with manually lifting policies have resulted from adherence to the RCN guidance which advises that "...the manual lifting of patients is eliminated in all but exceptional or life threatening situations" (RCN Code of Practice for Patient Handling, 1996).

- The Health and Safety Executive's guidance - *Handling Home Care: Achieving safe, efficient and positive outcomes for care workers and clients* - issued in March 2002, highlights the need for manual handling practice in the community to comply not only with health and safety regulations, but also with other requirements under community care legislation, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Human Rights Act. In particular, the HSE states explicitly "implementation of policy and practice on lifting and handling should not place any unreasonable restrictions on client's rights to autonomy, privacy or dignity." (HSE, 2002).

Further information from: Sue Pratt, Disability Rights Commission - 020 7211 4061 or 07899 066 565.

Personal independence v. Professional 'Decree'

The following story was brought to our attention in autumn last year. The client, whom we shall call Linda, wanted her situation to be documented and discussed, to try and establish if other disabled people are facing similar difficulties.

Linda, is in her 30s, lives with her parents and attends a day centre. Her problem is about the help she needs to use the day centre accessible loo. She requires some help from a personal assistant in the loo situation but is able to stand up from her wheelchair by pulling herself to her feet holding on to the drop down bar fixed to the wall. She had been doing this for years without any problem.

The arrival of a new Occupational Therapist (OT) resulted in all clients being assessed in the toilet situation. To her great dismay Linda found herself subject to very strict limitations as to how she was to be helped in the accessible loo. She was told that she could no longer pull herself up by the drop down bar – that the bar was not provided for this purpose! They were there purely for the disabled person to hold on to when sitting on the loo bowl.

The centre staff were told that Linda must always be put into the hoist to go on to the loo. Using the hoist caused Linda great pain and discomfort: sitting in the hoist slings squashed her rib cage and was very painful. Over time staff found it very difficult to help Linda without causing her pain. This distressed them and some refused to work with her because of the physical hurt they caused.

Linda found that the decision about the hoist had far reaching effects on her activities at the day centre.

- She could no longer go out on day centre trips as the centre did not have a portable hoist. Accessible away-from-home loos do not have hoists in them. Even if a hoist had been available many accessible loos are not big enough to take a wheelchair user, two human helpers and a portable hoist.
- She had no control or involvement in decisions as to how her personal care needs would be dealt with.

The reaction in the ITAAL office to this sad saga was astonishment. In particular the fact that we were being asked to provide technical information that could be used to 'prove' to the OT concerned that drop down rails are designed, if fitted correctly, to be used by disabled people to transfer from wheelchair to toilet.

Through our networks we obtained the following comments on the situation.

A senior OT

The decree you describe is most curious. By that definition I was making mistakes for years with solutions that seemed very workable for my clients! I am not aware of, nor can I imagine any publication from the Department of Health that gives detailed practice of this nature. Neither am I aware of this emanating from manual handling guidance anywhere.

I can only conclude this is a matter of individual professional judgement, in which case a new dialogue needs to start around what works well for the individual client. Linda would be quite justified in asking the therapist to produce the evidence base/rationale for her 'decree'. It would also be worth asking the manufacturer how they intend the device to be used.

Disability Rights and Awareness training group

It would appear that there is concern about risk-taking here, but we are concerned at the lack of control that the client has in how her needs are managed. We are also concerned at the lack of understanding by the staff member of the effect this decision has on her quality of life.

Design Resource Centre

Provided that the bars are fitted correctly we cannot understand this 'decree'. It is known that disabled people cope in many different ways in accessible loos. We are aware of the growing move within centres providing care/support to disabled people to minimise any kind of perceived 'risk'. We know that many disabled people do need to have hoists available for staff to help them, but equally there

are many disabled people for whom using hoists is very painful. It is also important that disabled people can make use of what mobility they have to help themselves.

ITAAL Trustees

:: There is a need here to understand that disabled people cope in many different ways within accessible loos and use equipment in a wide variety of ways. Designers may not always be aware of this. The sheer diversity of layout of accessible loos means that disabled people have to be able to problem solve on sight in a range of different loo situations. ITAAL is very aware that disabled people develop their own very individual ways of coping in order to keep their independence and privacy.

:: There are a number of different types of drop-down bars fitted into away-from-home accessible loos. One would have to identify all manufacturers and check with them all what guidance they give on the use of such bars.

:: One wonders whether this 'decree' had caused problems for Linda outside the day centre when out and about with her parents – who presumably have over the years helped her to develop her technique within the loo.

:: ITAAL supports initiatives that ensure that staff know how to assist disabled people without injuring themselves. However in this instance it appears that the result is constant pain and discomfort for Linda. Although staff voiced their concerns, Linda does not appear to have access to an advocate to help her challenge her case. Also there was no mention of a complaints procedure that would allow clients at the centre to raise such issues.

:: Manual handling procedures are under Judicial Review by the Disability Rights

Commission. Bert Massie, Chair of the Commission, suggested that ITAAL collect and record information on manual handling issues for presentation to bodies such as the DRC.

ITAAL would be interested to hear from disabled people and staff about manual handling policies that have a negative effect on quality of life. We are aware that some people may be concerned that speaking out may bring them into conflict with service providers. All contacts will be treated in the strictest confidence.

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME NETWORK

Got IBS? Can't Travel? Yes you can!

One of the symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome is urgency – a need to rush to the toilet. The IBS Network, a national self help charity, offers support, advice and information to people with IBS.

Cards & Travel Cards

All members are issued with a *can't wait card* asking for help in locating a toilet quickly. The card is available in a variety of languages including a travel version asking for help in 11 languages of popular holiday destinations. (Travel card available from the Network, suggested donation £5)

Tips

Members share ideas through our journal Gut Reaction and e-mail discussion lists e.g.: on airlines reserve seats near the toilets – these are usually the least popular for other people but ideal for those with IBS. Carry a clean-up kit with you in case of accidents. You probably won't need it but just having it to hand

can give the confidence to travel away from home.

Information and Support Network

We have volunteer telephone contacts, befrienders, local groups and a helpline staffed by specialist IBS nurses. No one with IBS need feel alone. We encourage people to contact other groups who can help such as INCONTACT and ITAAL.

Campaigning for better toilet facilities

The IBS Network wants to see accessible clean public toilets freely available. As part of its commitment to the Manifesto for Continence launched in 2001, the Network actively campaigns to stop closures, reverse the trend and put toilets back on the agenda.

Further information from: IBS Network
Northern General Hospital, Sheffield
S5 7AU Tel. 0114 2611531
www.ibsnetwork.org.uk

ACCESSIBLE PROPERTY REGISTER

www.accessible-property.org.uk

This initiative that will be of immense benefit to disabled people and their families not only in selling accessible and adapted property, but in identifying properties around the country that might be suitable for them to buy or rent. The Directors Conrad Hodgkinson and Christine Barton would welcome your comments on the site. The website also challenges estate agents to be more aware of disabled customers!

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

MOBILITY ROADSHOW SEEKS IDEAL ACCESSIBLE LOO

**Jan Gethings, Executive Director,
Mobility Choice**

It doesn't really matter how good the day was, how well the event was organised or even what the weather did, the two things we all remember when we get home were how good or bad the toilets were and what the food was like.

As organisers of the Mobility Roadshow one of the most challenging tasks to get right over the years has been the accessible toilets. With some 20,000 disabled people visiting the show over three days it is imperative that we have a reliable source of good quality units to call on each year. But this has proved to be more difficult than one could imagine.

There wasn't a sole distributor who could meet all our needs for the show, and the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act further exacerbated the problem. With the obligation now to provide accessible toilets as part of every booking, toilet hire companies were unable to supply us with their entire fleet of accessible units for fear of losing other contracts. Consequently we were forced to hire units from a variety of sources – some decidedly better than others.

Over the years we have had to put up with broken ramps, no handrails, no locks on doors, locked doors and no keys, or just plain all-round sub-standard facilities. I remember one toilet being delivered the night before the show was due to open

(late evening delivery of course!). When I mentioned that the door handle was very small and could be difficult to manage, I was told "it's quite easy, all you need is a screwdriver" – obviously an essential item that everyone carries for a day out!

Determined to find a reliable solution, we came to the conclusion that the only way to find the number and quality of units we needed was to build our own to Part M standards. For the Mobility Roadshow 2001 at Crowthorne, we hired some units from The Convenience Company. The quality of both the equipment and on-site service was exceptional, winning high praise from visitors. Following discussions with The Convenience Company they agreed to work closely with us to build our own accessible toilets. These were used at this year's Mobility Roadshow (2002), and for the first time we did not receive one complaint about the toilets. Instead we received letters of praise; one visitor even described them as being "better than their loo at home"!

The toilets are serviced and maintained by The Convenience Company on our behalf and are available for hire to other companies and organisations – with a percentage of the hire fee going to the Charity (Mobility Choice) that organises the Roadshow. As the units only require a 13amp power supply, they are very adaptable for use in any environment.

For further information contact
The Convenience Company on 0115989
0011, and make your event memorable
for all the right reasons!

**Want to share a Viewpoint,
Personal Experience or
Business Perspective about
accessible loos?
Then why not write for Privy
Counsel. Closing date for
Issue 4 – September 30,2003**

15



**The Convenience
Company
Accessible Mobile Loo**



FROM THE ITAAL OFFICE

ITAAL TRUSTEES

Janet Scammell MBE

Janet was employed by Avon County Council Social Services Department as a Support Officer for clients attending Avon day centres. She was medically retired in 1992. Although disabled and a wheelchair user she has worked tirelessly for the benefit of others and has a wealth of experience and commitment to disability equality. She was awarded the MBE in 1999 for her work in the Avon area.

Her main field of expertise is personal mobility for disabled people and she actively campaigned nationally on transport and access issues. She currently works in a voluntary capacity with several organisations of disabled people at local and national level. These include *Arthritis Care* as secretary to the Bristol South Branch since 1988, and now Vice Chair of Bristol and Gloucester Area Liaison Committee. She represented Bristol and Gloucester on the South East England Regional Committee and is now Chair. She is a founder member of Bristol *Shopmobility*, Chair of Trustees for the past two years, and a Trustee of the National Federation of *Shopmobility* since 2000.

Disabled Drivers' Motor Club Janet has been Avon Area Representative since 1985, and she and her husband Ray run the DDMC Caravan and Campers Section. She served for over 12 years on the national committee holding a number of posts including Chair and Vice Chair. She also edited the magazine *The Disabled Motorist*.

She has represented the DDMC on the Department of Transport's Disabled Peoples Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

Disabled Living Centre (West of England)

Janet is a founder member of the DLC and has served for many years as a Trustee, holding a number of positions including Chair of the Trustees.

Bristol City Council Janet has been an Equalities Advisor to both the former Avon County Council and the Bristol City Council and was recently elected Chair of Bristol City Council's Disability Advisors. She works closely with the Highways and Planning Departments. She is presently involved on advising on the disabled access and parking requirements for the new shopping centre.

ACCESSIBLE MEETING VENUE

Can you help ITAAL trustees find an accessible meeting place in the Watford/ Hertfordshire area?

We are looking for a meeting place (6-8 people) that is fully accessible to wheelchair users, has kitchen facilities, parking and an accessible loo that can take a power chair, with room for helper and a portable hoist. It has to be close to M25/M1 motorways and a mainline station, and at a minimum cost for a 4-hour meeting.

Please telephone Diana Twitchin on 020 8904 8321 if you know of a possible venue.

MONEY MATTERS

Regular giving

In the last issue of Privy Counsel we appealed to readers who might be prepared to commit themselves to raising £100 a year for ITAAL. We are delighted that three people so far have taken up the challenge.

This year our budget for running costs is just over £6000. So we could largely cover these if just 60 people would take up the £100 challenge!

Running to raise funds

David Edwards is taking part in the Plymouth Half Marathon in May and has decided that ITAAL should benefit from his sponsorship funds. We very much welcome David's help in this way and hope that readers will make the most of this fundraising opportunity by supporting David. **A sponsorship form is included with this newsletter.**

ESSENTIAL COMPANION

Do you need help to get accessible loo messages over to someone you know? Then why not have a personal supply of Essential Companions to hand out.

The Companion covers a range of subjects, including:

- planning
- building
- setting policies for managing facilities.

It is an extremely useful tool for a whole range of different professionals involved in the provision of toilet facilities, as well as disabled people trying to explain the problems to a family member.

Our rates are - including p&p:

1-5 copies £2 each (inc p & p)
Bulk rate (6 or more copies) - £1 each
Please make cheques payable to ITAAL.
If you require more than 50 contact ITAAL office for quote.

ITAAL Directory & Essential Companion

Bought together - Price £10.00
Donation towards UK p&p (it's big)
£4.50

Please make cheques etc payable to ITAAL.

**Orders for The Directory and Companion should be sent to ITAAL c/o Equal Ability
170 Benton Hill, Wakefield Road,
Horbury, W Yorks WF4 5HW**

ACCESS AUDITS – a planning tool for businesses

This video, produced by the Centre for Accessible Environments, explains what an access audit is and how its recommendations can be used to improve business premises and customer service. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 every service provider in the UK has a duty to make its services accessible to disabled people.

Available as a VHS cassette, CD Rom and DVD with subtitles and BSL.
All versions £12 inclusive of p and p.

For further information contact:
Centre for Accessible Environments
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London SE1 2NY
Tel/textphone: 020 7357 8182
Email: info@cae.org.uk
www.cae.org.uk

A COMMON PROBLEM IN AN ACCESSIBLE LOO

ITAAL regularly receive complaints about the incorrect positioning of the flush handle in accessible loos. All too often it is on the opposite side to the turning space by the loo bowl. This means that a wheelchair user or ambulant disabled person cannot reach across to push down the flush handle. Loo providers complain that disabled users are inconsiderate in not flushing the loo! In despair on the occasion of the last complaint the Editor turned to Shakespeare for help!

A SOLILOQUY TO THE FLUSH

*To Flush or not to Flush, that is the question
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to sniff the pongs and aromas of
outrageous gases*

*Or to take arms against an orgy of builders
And by opposing end them?*

*To cry Let's Flush once more, and by that flush to say we end
The constant headache of a thousand natural whiffs
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.*

*To weep, to flush, to flush, perchance to clean, ay, there's the
scrub,*

*For in that flush of sound what dreams may come
When we have shuffled out this netty* cell,
That must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long a sit;
For who would bear the shouts and yells of dismay
The sitter's wrong, the proud man's (woman's) shame
The pangs of frustration or the world's dismay,
The flatulence of office that spurns
That patient knocking on the door, whilst the
Sitter doth cover their bare bodkin.*

*Who would far rather bear to grunt and sweat his weary life
Without that dread of something left undone.*

*The undiscovered country from whence no traveller returns
relieved,*

*To make us better bear the loos we have, and
Move to tell of others that we long for.*

*Conscience doth make cowards of us all
The flush is our resolution*

*But 'tis past our cast of thought
Our enterprise is of great pith and moment
With huge regard for human niceties
But 'tis lost in the name of action*

Until **YOU MOVE THE BLOODY FLUSH HANDLE**

* netty is the Northumbrian regional term for the loo!

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AVAILABLE IN PDF FILE
AND CAN BE DOWN
LOADED FROM THE
ITAAL WEBSITE.**

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

**Next issue of Privy Counsel
Closing date for items
September 30 2003**

APOLOGY

We apologise to Sharon Woodward that her address was given incorrectly in her article in Issue 2 – it should be **67 Rossell Drive, Stapleford, Nottingham NG9 7EG**

STOP PRESS APPEAL

As you will see from the insert about the UK edition work we want to make contact with disabled people, their families, friends and organisations in

Wales

Scotland

Northern Ireland

**to ensure that we can identify as
many loos as possible.**

**Can you help us to extend our
contact lists?**

- **by passing details to friends in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and encouraging them to contact us**
- **or sending us a contact name and address and we will contact them**

**Please help us to help you
answer the question
Is There An Accessible
Loo?**

Printed, collated & stapled by Office World.
With thanks for their generous discount.

Is There An Accessible Loo? (ITAAL)
10 Stilecroft Gardens
North Wembley HA0 3HE
Tel 020 8904 8321 Fax 020 8908 2648
Email AccLooProj@aol.com
Website www.itaal.org.uk

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