

# RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021



**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

## **Local Toilets Strategy – Interim Progress Statement**

**November 2021**



This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

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## Context

The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 requires each local authority within Wales to publish a local toilets strategy. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's strategy was published in May 2019.

The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 Part 8 focuses on 'Provision of Toilets'. The provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is a discretionary function of local authorities who have the power under section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936 to provide public conveniences. There is no duty for local authorities to provide public toilets directly.

However, local authorities must action a strategic view on how facilities can be provided and accessed; addressing factors such as location, accessibility, facilities, frequency of use and quality of existing sites, as well as determining whether additional or fewer sites are required by their local population.

Prior to publication of the 2019 strategy, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council reviewed existing toilet provision in council owned facilities across the local authority area.

To support the requirements of the Act, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council adopted an integrated, community-centred approach to the provision of public conveniences.

The RCTCBC Toilet Strategy was published in May 2019 and can be viewed here: [Local Toilets Strategy | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/local-toilets-strategy)

The strategy established two key objectives with a number of supporting actions for implementation, whilst encompassing future consideration and opportunities to assess the evolving needs of local communities. The impact of the pandemic has had unavoidable impact on progressing the overarching aims of the strategy as well as impeding existing access to community toilet provision.

## Strategic Objectives

- To enhance and maximise the use of existing facilities
- To promote additional, appropriate and accessible facilities

# **RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021**

## **Strategic Aim**

The strategy aims to review the quality and quantity of local toilets throughout the county borough and to provide or facilitate the provision of clean, safe, accessible and sustainable toilets for residents and visitors to the area at locations where the need for such facilities has been identified.

To achieve this strategy, we will:

- identify the current level of provision of public toilets;
- analyse the findings of the completed assessment of need for toilets available for use by the public in their area;
- consider the requirements of the general population;
- identify the needs for particular user groups;
- identify any gaps in current provision;
- support Welsh Government initiatives to improve information available on toilet facilities;
- provide information setting out the steps which the local authority proposes to take to meet this need, and any other information which the council considers appropriate.

## **Impact of the Pandemic**

Progress on the aims of the toilets strategy has inevitably been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the last two/three years, public facilities remained closed for a period from 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, with residents remaining at home with businesses closed/furloughed for a significantly longer period of time. Facilities were gradually reopened with control measures and restrictions in place, this commenced on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2020 with all facilities open to the public again by January 2021.

## **Key Developments**

- Increase in available toilet and adult changing place provision
- Improvements and enhancements to existing toilet and changing place provision
- Review of and commitment by the Council to maintain RADAR key accessible toilet facilities.
- Alignment with Rhondda Cynon Taf working towards an Age Friendly Community agenda as well as Dementia Friendly Communities in RCT.
- Progress against communications plan to increase awareness of toilet availability within the county borough.
- Consideration to raising the profile via web and social media of accessible toilets and changing places.

## **RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021**

- Changing Places mapping has also taken place, with approaches made to add them to the work undertaken as well as ensuring these facilities are also promoted on Changing Places Toilets ([changing-places.org](http://changing-places.org)).

### **Progress Against the Aims of the Strategy**

Rhondda Cynon Taf is required to publish an interim progress statement on the 2019 Local Toilets Strategy. This statement covers the period between May 2019 and May 2021.

The Community Hub development projects achieved significant gains for RCT communities since the approval of Cabinet in 2018. There is now a network of Community Hubs across the borough.

The Community Hub projects ensure that citizens across all areas of the county have access to opportunities that enhance their life chances, providing buildings that offer safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces. This includes accessible toilet provision.

During the period 2019 to 2021, extensive refurbishments were completed on Porth Plaza, Canolfan Pennar, Llys Cadwyn, Yr Hwb Ferndale, Arts Factory and Cynon Linc. The new facilities are now being enjoyed by visitors to the Hubs as well as visitors to the nearby local parks and the Town Centres.

**Porth Plaza – Porth** - New accessible toilets were installed as part of the significant refurbishment of Porth Plaza in March 2020. Porth Plaza is located within a busy town centre, accessible to all residents whilst the building is open.

**Canolfan Pennar – Mountain Ash** - Official opening of the new Community Hub to the public was June 2019. The venue provides useful facilities beyond what is normally provided in a standard accessible toilet with the building in the heart of the community, making it easily accessible.

**Yr Hwb – Ferndale** – During the intervening period Yr Hwb Ferndale benefited from significant development under RCTCBC Community Asset Transfer arrangements, which includes an accessible toilet open to the public during extended opening hours.

**Llys Cadwyn – Pontypridd** - Official opening of the new Community Hub to the public was March 2020. The venue provides useful facilities beyond what is normally provided in a standard accessible toilet with the building in the heart of the community, making it easily accessible.

**Cynon Linc** – Significant development of a Community Asset Transfer in August 2020, with construction works commencing and concluding in October 2021. This facility is open to the public during building opening hours and attached to a GP surgery.

**Rhondda Heritage Park - Trehafod** – Significant development of the site has improved the toilets which now includes a dedicated accessible toilet and changing place toilet. **Ynysangharad War Memorial Park – Pontypridd** - Damaged during

## RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021

Storm Dennis in 2020 the toilets were completely re-furbished, alongside those of the National Lido of Wales and are in addition to those of the Lido.

### Dementia Friendly

Community Hubs are located around the borough, providing a comprehensive range of Council and partner services to the local community. The Hubs are accessible and vibrant buildings designed to be enjoyed by everyone. It is vitally important that toilet provision within the Hubs is accessible and inclusive, to cater for the needs of all visitors, particularly those who often face barriers when out in the community due to inadequate toilet facilities e.g. older people, parents with children, individuals with dementia.

As RCT works with local Dementia Friendly Communities, the Authority is committed to making positive changes to improve life for those living with dementia.

### Changing Places

Changing Places toilets are facilities that enable everyone, regardless of their access needs, disability or reliance on the assistance of carers or specialist equipment, to use a toilet facility with dignity and hygienically.

People with profound and multiple learning disabilities or with physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. The aim is to provide Changing Places toilets in addition to standard accessible toilets.

The provision of Changing Places enables people to have more choice to access more activities in the community, without having to go home, be changed in undignified circumstances or be uncomfortable and feel unhygienic. Scoping of the position regarding the availability of changing places in Rhondda Cynon Taf has been completed and where additional facilities have been identified these have been registered with

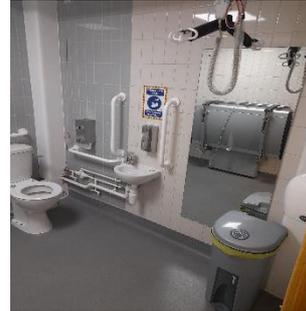
[www.changing-places.org](http://www.changing-places.org).

**Porth Plaza – Porth** - Changing Place completion in March 2020. Porth Plaza is located within a busy town centre, and the Changing Place toilet provides easy access to those who need it.

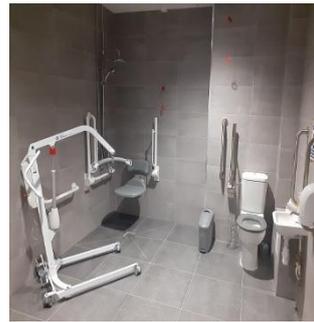
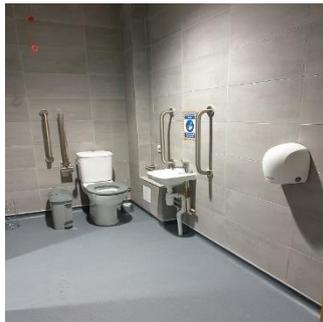


## RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021

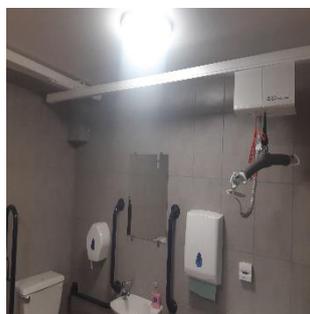
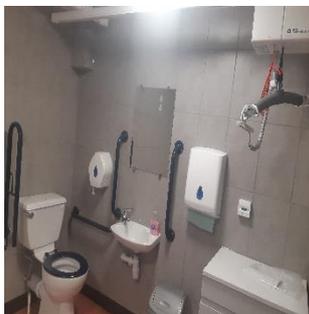
**Canolfan Pennar – Mountain Ash** - Venue provides useful facilities beyond what is normally provided in a standard accessible toilet, including electric hoist and adult changing bed within the building in the heart of the community, making it easily accessible to all residents and visitors.



**Llys Cadwyn – Pontypridd** - Venue provides useful facilities beyond what is normally provided in a standard accessible toilet, including electric hoist and adult changing bed within the building in the heart of the community, making it easily accessible.

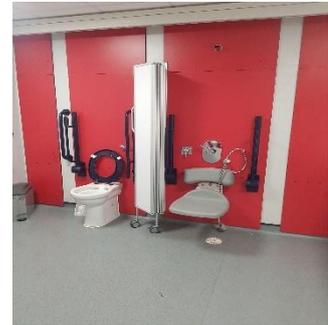
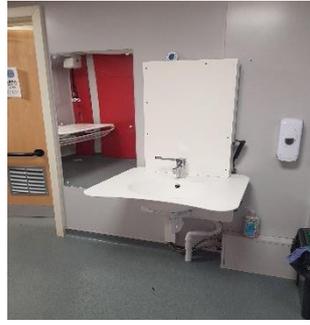


**Arts Factory – Ferndale - Arts Factory – Ferndale** - Alongside the development of Yr Hwb, and to compliment the facilities, RCTCBC also worked in partnership with an established community group to refurbish the toilets which offers facilities beyond what is normally provided in a standard accessible toilet, including electric hoisting and adult changing bed.

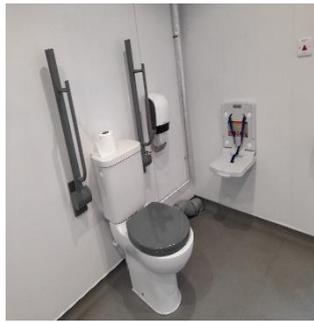


## RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021

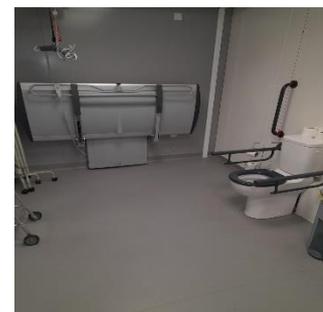
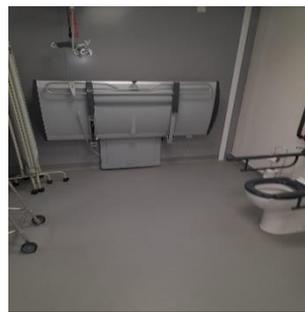
**National Lido of Wales - Pontypridd** – the Lido suffered significant damage due to Storm Dennis in February 2020, quickly followed by the onset of Covid 19 pandemic, repairs and improvements to the site continued with the re-opening of the facility in May 2020.



**Dare Valley Country Park - Aberdare** – To enable those staying and visiting Dare Valley Country Park a Changing Places toilet was installed to compliment existing toilet facilities for the park.



**Rhondda Heritage Park – Porth** – As part of the significant refurbishment Changing Place toilet has been installed that is accessible to the public during opening hours.



## **RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021**

### **Improving Awareness and Information Available on Toilet Provision**

It is essential that residents and visitors are able to easily and quickly find the nearest suitable toilet facilities for their needs, to enable people to be able to go outside and participate fully in their community and local authority area.

Initial work has been taken to explore a user friendly, localised toilet mapping solution that citizens and visitors can access on their mobile devices. Conversations are ongoing to potentially develop a mobile-friendly, interactive map on the website. Potentially working with Tourism to increase awareness. Toilet mapping could potentially sit alongside these.

The Strategy Review will consider any further developments to social media and web pages, and include non-digital information considerations.

### **Cleansing and Maintenance Protocols**

Council maintained toilet facilities are subject to rigorous routine cleansing operations. Council owned public toilets and urinals in RCT are cleaned Monday – Saturday with all facilities except disabled toilets closed on Sundays.

Regular maintenance is carried out when needed and in response to reported defects. This maintenance addresses issues, such as broken toilets, and is dealt with by dedicated officers within the service. There has been recent investment in electrical locking systems so facilities can be opened and closed remotely, allowing more time to be allocated for cleaning routines. The system can also be used for instances when toilets need to be closed urgently.

Toilets within Hubs and Libraries are also cleaned on a daily basis with additional cleaning carried out as required. The toilets are also monitored on a regular basis so that interim cleaning can also take place.

### **Exploring All Available Options**

There is potential development to work alongside businesses and organisations with pre-existing toilet facilities to explore whether they would agree to allow the use of their toilets by non-patrons and passers-by. A variety of methods are being employed for this, including liaising with Neighbourhood Networks, local business networks and individual contacts. This will help to ensure a broad reach across the county borough and, ultimately, increase the potential availability of toilets for public use.

# **RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021**

## **Consultation**

As a result of the 2019 consultation, toilet provision has now been identified as a key area of focus in the Council's Age Friendly Communities work programme, with further consultation directly with older people via local 50+ Forums, Neighbourhood Networks, the RCT Older Persons Advisory Group, Community Groups for Older People and at specific events planned for 2022.

## **Developing Networks**

Liaison will take place with businesses and others within the community to identify locations where toilets could be made publicly available. Through knowledge sharing with Cardiff, it is understood that the development of a community toilet scheme was made possible through a volunteer approach. The volunteers live in local areas and champion the project as well as approaching local businesses and cafes etc. These volunteers make a huge difference as they promote it by word of mouth within the community. The potential to work with volunteers within RCT to initiate an RCT toilet scheme within communities will be explored in the coming months.

## **What Happens Next?**

RCTCBC will review the 2019 Toilet Strategy with any required revision of the strategy to be published in May 2023.

Responsibility for delivering RCTCBC's Toilet Strategy will be aligned with Age Friendly Communities and Dementia Friendly Communities priorities with a Lead Officer identified.

RCTCBC intends to apply to future funding opportunities to install further Changing Places within the county borough. The placement of these will be determined by current facilities and availability in suitable publicly accessible buildings.

The identified Lead Officer of the Toilet Strategy will ensure all council developments consider resident needs in terms of public toilets, community toilets and changing places.

A review of Community Hubs will take place, with the potential to develop further facilities in locations to be agreed.

In order to better support people with dementia in our communities, dementia friendly toilet seats will be considered for installation in council owned facilities. Improving colour contrast in these facilities will assist those with dementia to make safe use of bathroom facilities.

## **RCTCBC - Local Toilets Strategy – Interim progress statement – November 2021**

To ensure that facilities are accessible to everyone, regardless of their access needs, disability or reliance on the assistance of carers or specialist equipment, to use a toilet facility with dignity and hygienically. New accessible signage to tackle discrimination will be considered for installation in council and community facilities.

Investigate a community toilet programme, initially mapping toilet provision across the county borough.