



# Smarter Public Conveniences

“We engaged Healthmatic to clean and maintain the public toilets at The Wharf, Newbury, when we took over its operation from the District Council. They have helped us assess usage at our toilets and worked with our staff to help deliver a service which won 5 stars at this year’s ‘Loo of the Year’ awards. We have been very pleased with their contribution, their advice and their service.”

Hugh Peacocke  
Town Clerk  
Newbury Town Council

“Our toilets were not a disaster, but needed renovation and bringing up to a modern standard. We also needed to significantly reduce the costs of operation. Following a tender, Healthmatic have helped transform our toilets, introducing modern designs and charging systems which have reduced our running costs by 70%.”

Russell Stone  
Head of Operations  
York City Council

“We are a relatively small Council, but needed to work with a contractor who could deliver a wide range of services including building work, access control systems and comprehensive maintenance. Healthmatic have supported us in all these areas and we now have a mildly profitable Public Toilet aimed at our many visitors but which does not drain our resources.”

Michael Johnson  
Clerk  
Lakes Parish Council



*“Healthmatic have made a massive contribution to the development of public toilets across the UK.”*

Richard Chiswell

President  
British Toilet Association

**Healthmatic** was launched in 1990 as a specialist provider of public toilets to local Councils. We remain committed to this market, with 130 UK and Irish Councils currently employing our services to design, install, clean and maintain their toilets. We have depots all over the UK with full or part time staff available in most areas. Our technology is British-designed with component parts manufactured in various different areas across the country.

The majority of our toilet designs now employ coin or contactless entry systems, but many authorities prefer to provide free toilets and operate a timed access facility, enabling the toilet to open and close automatically.

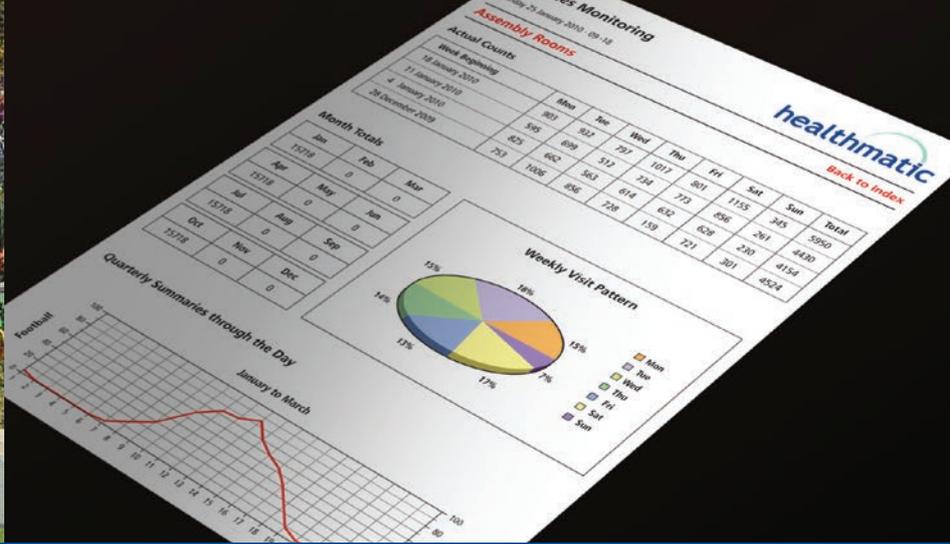
All the toilets we install can now be accessed remotely, providing live information at the touch of a button, including number of users, cash takings, cleaner visits and even data for toilet roll requirement.

## Provision of Public Toilets

Public toilets are a continuous issue for all local authorities, not just in the UK, but across the world. A quick glance at any local press in any country will feature a disagreement over the state or even closure of the local public facility, with the cash-strapped Council on one hand and the ‘we pay our taxes’ public on the other. Harmony is a rare commodity and is only achieved when proper consideration is given to the provision.

Public conveniences are not a statutory service. However, most Councillors will be aware of the pressure from both locals and visitors to provide decent, clean and safe toilets. We all know the agony of not being able to find a public toilet, as well as the relief when we do find one.

The aim of this brochure is to throw some light on the alternative options for Councils, both large and small, in providing their public toilet services. It covers different types of toilet and the options for purchasing, as well as alternative strategies for cleaning and maintenance.



## Research

Running a 'smart service' starts with having good information about the current set of toilets within your area. Good information will help you overcome the prejudice of all parties involved.

There are three main areas which will need research:

- How many people actually use the toilets and what is their profile in terms of age and requirement
- The seasonality of the toilets and the times they are being used
- The actual costs of running the toilets

It is essential that you cut through the noise and hyperbole surrounding the toilets to know how many people are actually using each one. This can easily be achieved by using our **h2evidence specialist public toilet people counters**.

The toilet will also be used at varying times of day and varying times of year. By compiling this information, it is possible to start building a profile of the actual service which is required.

Finally, you need to know the costs of the service. In some Councils, the costs will be accurately laid out and easy to decipher; in others, the costs will be hidden within myriad different divisions and cost centres. In order to make an objective assessment of the service, first-hand information is very useful.

Healthmatic supply and install counters for many Councils on a rental basis. We will turn around requests and have a fully web-based counting system installed and recording data in under 5 days from commission.

## When Planning a New Toilet . . .

Seven factors must be considered:

- Does the Council own the land?
- Is planning required, and if so, is it likely to be granted?
- Are the services within a reasonable distance and is the foul sewer accessible?
- Is the funding in place and does it create stipulations which should be included in the tender?
- Is it possible that outside funding is available either from a local company or Government?
- Are there employment implications for existing Council staff? Will there be TUPE requirements?
- Have the other agencies been consulted, for instance the Town Centre Manager?



## Attended

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There are still many fully attended toilets around the UK for the simple reason that they provide the best service to the public. Users feel safe, they are generally clean and, for the most part, will be well maintained.

However, attended toilets are expensive to run and staff, so we have learned to employ several different approaches to help keep the cost of their operation contained.

**ONE ATTENDANT** In the 21st Century, users have become accustomed to one attendant managing both the Ladies and Gents. There is no need to employ separate sexes to look after each area. In practice, a shift system which leads to employees overlapping for periods at the beginning and end of shifts is a good way to run the toilet, as they can deal with issues which a lone worker may not be able to manage.

**OFF PEAK** Most toilets have peak and off peak periods. In the off peak periods, it is worth considering closing the main toilet area and instead run two or three direct access cubicles.

- The level of service for the users will not drop markedly, but the cost of running the toilet will drop significantly.
- Attendants can be vulnerable to abuse and at worst, violence, as the area around the toilet quiets down at off peak periods. Genuine toilet users will still benefit from the direct access cubicles.

**CHARGE FOR USE** Most people when asked are happy to pay a small charge to use a clean and safe toilet, especially if it is attended. Typical charges range from 20p to 50p. At the top end would be Harrods which charges £1, and at the lower end are the many free options. A really busy toilet with 200,000 users will cost in the region of £60,000 - £80,000 to operate, including all staff, utilities and consumables.

**MAINTENANCE** A poorly maintained attended toilet is almost the worst of all worlds. The attendants tend to be demotivated, the public resent the poor facilities and the Council has to keep funding the costs. If you are considering an attended toilet, it must be worth giving it a refurbishment before embarking on this expensive but excellent provision.

Healthmatic runs the UK's first commercial 'pay as you go' public toilet. It is on London's South Bank beside the London Eye and is known as the 'Jubiloo'.

Please visit [www.facebook.com/jubiloo](https://www.facebook.com/jubiloo) to have a look.



## Automatic Public Conveniences (APC)

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The APC was first introduced to the UK by JC Decaux in the mid eighties. Since then it has enjoyed a mixed reputation, with some operators swearing by them and others hating them.

At its most basic level, an APC is a direct access toilet with an integrated handwash system, usually with a sliding door and it will automatically wash the bowl and floor after each user. Typically the door will open after 15 minutes of use in order to prevent people sleeping within. An advanced APC will prevent the door shutting if more than one adult enters at a time and will automatically open the door if it detects vandalism in its interior.

Our experience has been that an APC in the right location, with sufficient Council explanation, will provide high quality, clean and safe toilets for the public. Situated in the wrong place, an APC may attract negative press and could become a burden rather than boon for the provider.

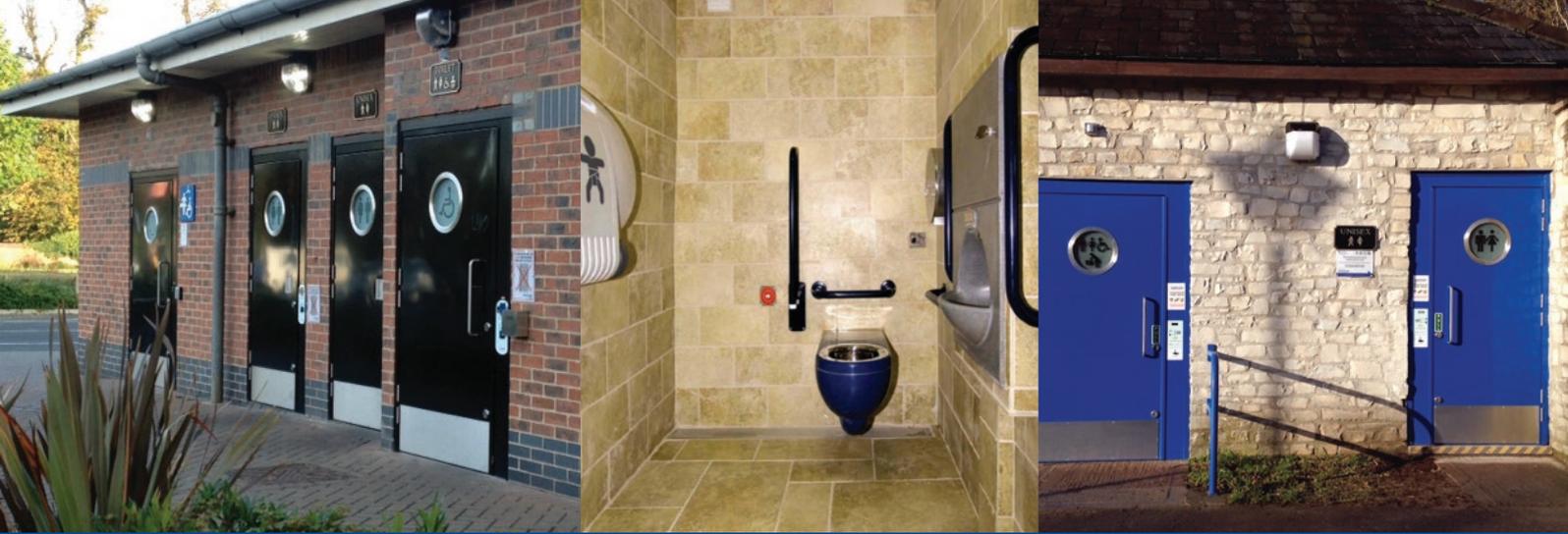
The right locations for APCs are:

- Parks
- Night time economy zones
- Car Parks - but only as back up to core provision

In all these places, the APC will have high utility value to the user and its robust design will ensure that the facility is open and available 24 hours a day. Other types of toilet can be vulnerable to vandalism and anti-social behaviour, but APCs will tend to have the systems to cope with the array of human activities thrown at them and will be available to the public when most needed. We highly recommend APCs as part of a toilet solution, but rarely as the ONLY solution.

APCs can be fitted into existing buildings or into new structures, with one to three cubicles per location as the most popular. Most APCs we have installed have been unisex.

*For further information on all of our toilets, please have a look at our website, [www.healthmatic.com](http://www.healthmatic.com) or email us at [sales@healthmatic.com](mailto:sales@healthmatic.com)*



## Semi-Automatic Public Convenience (The Semi)

The Semi is also a direct access toilet, but one which is more suited to higher volume locations and less orientated to the night time economy. In general they are 'nicer' toilets than the APCs as they can have tiled interiors and are all 'no touch' sensor operated. The handwash and dryer are located within the cubicle.

Most Semis are installed on edge of car park locations, poised between shops and the car parking area. They will typically be in a run of two to five, with at least one Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) accessible option. As they do not have a bowl and floor wash after each user, the turnaround time is fast, with one user following directly after another.



*Toilets shared with bus drivers' office*

A well positioned run of four Semis will deal with 75,000 users per annum without undue queuing.

Most Semi installations are put into existing toilet blocks, but new builds are not uncommon and are often better fit for purpose. When installing a set of new direct access toilets into an existing block, there will normally be space in the toilet that is now surplus to immediate requirement. As the footfall

is normally strong past a toilet, this space can usefully be used for a small shop, cafe or serving hatch. Healthmatic can manage this sublet for you as part of our service.

There is no doubt that a direct access cubicle is a better option than a traditional lobby style toilet for the following reasons:

- Easier to clean and maintain
- Less prone to abuse due to the 'you never know who's outside' factor
- Flexible opening and closing systems
- Easy to introduce charging systems

As hygiene moves higher up the agenda, there has been greater demand for automatic seat cleaning systems. This can be achieved without significant alteration to the basic specification via one of the self cleaning toilet seats on the market.

The Semi is the closest style of toilet to an at home example. We have installed over 500 Semis across the UK and rarely find an unhappy user.



## Waterless Toilets



The cost of running a set of public toilets is sometimes prohibitive for a local community. The costs of regular cleaning, utilities and maintenance all act to make it difficult to justify their operation.

Waterless toilets are perfect for locations which are more remote from mainstream sites but still have a regular requirement for a toilet. Typical examples would be busy footpaths, car parks, monuments and bird watching sites.

By using good old Mother Nature to break down the deposits and a robust design to withstand the elements, our waterless toilets have proven themselves in over 500 locations across Europe.

Waterless toilets use two approaches to breaking down matter - either air dried or using worms. The right choice for you will depend on the situation and the likely number of visitors to the area.

The cost of running a waterless toilet is a fraction of the cost of a full public toilet and while it does not provide running water for washing, nor a heated seat, it is a facility that will be there when the need arises.

Please contact us at [sales@healthmatic.com](mailto:sales@healthmatic.com) for further information on the range of waterless toilets.

Concept drawing for toilet in a London square





## Charging

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Charging for toilets is an issue being faced by many Councils at the moment. With budget cuts year on year, it has become even more important to raise revenue from all potential sources.

Most people will say that they are happy to pay for clean and safe public toilets and the generally accepted rate is 20p in the country and 40p - 50p in urban contexts. However, when you install a charging system to toilets, you should expect a reduction of around 40% in the number of locals using the toilet as they will find alternative provision. The visitors to your town or city will generally be happy to pay as long as the facilities are clean and well maintained.

### REVENUE

We would expect a set of four busy semi-automatic toilets to have 50,000 uses per annum, equating to £10,000 of revenue. This will represent about two thirds of the actual cost of running the toilet (including utilities, consumables, cleaning, maintenance etc). This level of usage will only happen in a busy location with a high number of visitors to a town. (One paradox of higher numbers is that users tend to hold the door open for one another and hence can lower the revenue in really busy times).

A typical attended facility costs around £60,000 per annum to run and therefore needs 300,000 users at 20p to break even. This is highly possible in a busy tourist destination, but most smaller towns will not cover the costs.

### ALTERNATIVE TO STRAIGHT CHARGING

Not all Councils want to go down the charging route for a variety of reasons. One half way house is to introduce tokens, *whether physical or electronic*, as well as coin entry into toilets. The tokens are given to local residents but not to visitors, and are effectively free. Other card based entry systems can also be catered for.

This way, the hard pressed rate payer does not 'pay twice' for a public service.

### CONTACTLESS

A very popular option is to fit contactless payment systems to one or more of the cubicles. This allows users to access the toilet without the need for coins and effectively removes any pressure to have a change machine on a location.



### SECURITY

A charge will reduce the amount of casual vandalism sustained by a toilet. 20p will not put off a determined drug taker or graffiti artist, but it will reduce the number of school children hanging around a toilet and causing trouble.

Be mindful though, that if you charge too much (£1 and above), the toilet becomes a no go area for everybody except the drug pushers themselves.



## Entry Control

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The lobby/cubicle set up in the traditional toilet means the only entry control point is the main door. Open - and anybody can walk in. Shut - and nobody gains entry. For Councils with a set of traditional toilets, a member of staff has to go round unlocking the toilets in the morning and locking them up again in the evening.

There are a number of problems associated with this:

- Toilet opening and closing is subject to staff attendance and vulnerable to illness and holidays
- It is often a time expensive process with the routine taking up to two hours either end of the day
- Environmental impact associated with the travelling between the toilets

We suggest that, wherever possible, this process is either managed locally or through automating the door opening and shutting process.

In Direct Access toilets, entry is managed through automated locking. The door may be locked by a user inside, or by a time lock, which will open and shut the toilet in the morning and evening.

The locking system can be managed by a local timeclock style device, or more flexibly via a modem and remote management system. In practice, most Councils opt for the local timeclock which has a feeling (although perhaps not a reality) of greater reliability.

A charge is often levied at the door to allow entry. This can be managed using a simple coin entry system.

Healthmatic supply doors designed to be very robust, with a steel core and clad with a graffiti resistant skin. The frame will be cemented into place and the door hung on a quadruple hinge.

### Coin Entry Units

Healthmatic's coin entry units are designed to provide a secure, effective and simple means of access control at the point of entry into the toilet. They are typically attached to a locking system on the door which will be released when the correct coinage or other token is used.

As part of this process, we can also count the number of users and provide web based updated reports on usage and cleaner activity to the manager of the toilet.



## Entry Control

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### Doors

It is also popular to retrofit whole coin managed doors to toilets in conjunction with a refurbishment plan. The great benefit of this is that the costs of toilet management will fall due to the door being able to manage auto open/close, coins and the switching on and off of utilities.

**Swing or sliding doors?** Swing doors are more user friendly and people feel more confident closing the door behind them. Sliding doors are less vulnerable to vandalism and are easier for less mobile people to operate, especially in the wind. Overall, we would recommend considering a sliding door for the DDA cubicle and swing doors for the regular cubicles.



### Paddlegates and Turnstiles

The preferred entry control system for a high volume of users is paddlegates, which can either be operated by an attendant or via coin entry. Turnstiles, and similar barriers, are barred by the Public Lavatories Turnstile Act. There are moves afoot to update this law, but for the time being the Council must opt for the more expensive, but significantly more accessible paddles.

Paddlegates are extremely efficient at giving rapid access and exit. The typical turnaround time per person is less than 2 seconds, meaning a single gate can handle more than 30 people per minute. We have seen full height turnstiles (stadium entry style) in places, but these feel very draconian in a confined public space.

*Please have a look at our website [www.healthmatic.com](http://www.healthmatic.com) or email us at [sales@healthmatic.com](mailto:sales@healthmatic.com) for more information about access products.*



## Cleaning

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Councils can manage cleaning in a variety of different ways:

- In house teams
- Subcontracted to a general cleaning company
- Subcontracted to a specialist toilet management company

There are no hard and fast rules about the management of cleaning toilets. However, there are two areas which need particular consideration.

The first involves a similar issue to the locking/unlocking procedure. Staff in vans driving between toilets is often easier to manage, but is essentially expensive and will give you less value for money than a locally based cleaner. Time and again we see cleaners driving round and round, making cursory visits to the toilet because the contract says 'three visits per day'.

We would recommend that effort is made to source a local cleaner who will take ownership of the toilet and treat it as a prized establishment. Smarter operation means cleaning the toilet when it needs it, not X times per day. In summer this may be six times, while in winter this may be once.

The second is that the more 'traditional' the style of toilet, ie the more nooks and crannies there are in the lobby and cubicles, the more difficult the toilet is to keep clean. You will often see complaints in the local paper about the 'disgusting state' of the local public toilets, with the Council being blamed. It is often the nature of the toilet block, rather than the cleaner and Council themselves, which will make it revolting. Bacteria infested tiling, worn and old sanitary ware and peeling walls are all results of low investment. There is often nothing a cleaner can do apart from try and keep the show on the road.

A lick of paint and a new toilet roll holder simply will not suffice if the toilet has any long term ambitions. Either the layout of the toilet must be reconsidered in terms of eradicating the nooks and crannies, or the Council must consider Direct Access. In both cases, we believe that £1 spent today will save £2 or more further down the line.

Cleaners should have a clear and defined regime, have full training and understand the health and safety issues associated with the chemicals and systems they are using. There is useful information available via the Association of Building Cleaning Direct Service Providers.



## Maintenance

Public toilets are in the front line of public facing assets and, for reasons best known to teenagers and junkies, are the persistent target for vandalism and other anti-social behaviour.

The maintenance regime really starts therefore in the design and the cleaning of the toilet. Loose fittings, peeling walls, dirty floors and broken windows all encourage further deterioration. It is a generalisation, but a well maintained toilet is easier to keep in good condition and will be less liable to abuse than a poorly kept toilet.

Toilets are generally maintained by the same operator who is responsible for the cleaning. This is sensible at several levels:

- Maintenance engineers can cover for cleaners when they are sick or on holiday
- A rapport will build between cleaning and maintenance which will create an effective team
- The Council manager has only one operator to blame in the event that the regime is unsatisfactory, so there is no buck passing

Toilets which do not have a planned maintenance regime are more likely to fail.

## Remote Monitoring - h2evidence Moxi

**Healthmatic's h2evidence Moxi System** is fitted into most of the toilets we manage. It provides valuable management information as well as reducing the costs of running the toilet.

Moxi will:

- Report the number of uses of the toilet on a daily basis
- Log when the cleaner starts and finishes their work
- Log when the Maintenance Engineer starts and finishes their work
- Incorporate a system to report vandalism
- Manage sharps and other issue reports
- Automatically open or lock the toilet

All this information is accessible in real time and via the web. This creates an unalterable audit trail for all parties involved in the management of the toilet.





## Planning a New or Refurbished Toilet

We would suggest, initially, that you get a specialist toilet company to conduct a review of your existing stock of toilets and for them to make some recommendations. This will generally be done for free and can form the basis of the discussions which your toilet committee will inevitably enjoy! Most companies will be very pleased to come and present their thoughts on your options as well. At Healthmatic, we have now conducted over one hundred full toilet reviews for Councils across the UK.

We would strongly recommend that a delegation visit example toilets prior to finalising thoughts. The words of a silky smooth salesman may not live up to reality in the physical manifestation. The main examples in the each area are:

- **APCs** Healthmatic, JC Decaux and Adshel
- **Semi-Automatics** Healthmatic, Danfo and Interpublic Urban Systems

Once the Council has decided what they would like to do, the matter of finance must be addressed. Nearly all tenders fall under OJEU rules as their value will be over £172,000.

There are three main purchase options:

- Capital purchase with a separate cleaning and maintenance agreement
- Lease purchase incorporating a separate cleaning and maintenance agreement
- Rental (incorporating both the Lease and the Maintenance). The Council can pay a single annual figure which will cover both the initial capital cost and the annual cleaning and maintenance

There is no requirement to enter into long agreements with contractors. However, the longer the agreement struck in a rental, then the less the annual payment will be. In general most longer term contracts will be index linked with the Retail Price Index.

Most toilet contractors come with a full design and build team which will help reduce the costs of the project. An architect is useful where the toilet is a new build and they can be asked to design the envelope surrounding the toilet block. The project will normally last 4 - 6 weeks. It is absolutely essential that the location chosen has been considered with reference to the location of the utilities, as otherwise the project costs can balloon if these have not been accounted for at the tender stage. Service connections will be ordered prior to contractors starting on site as they tend to have the longest lead time items.

Once installed, the toilet needs an official opening. This gives Councillors the opportunity to demonstrate the material benefits that they are bringing to the area and the public a chance to hear about the new toilet via the press. We have never known a case yet where the local press has not wanted to get involved with the opening!

# Important Laws

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## **1936 Public Health Act**

Allows Local Authorities to charge for Toilets. (The urinals exclusion was changed recently - see 2008 Sex Discrimination Act).

## **1963 Public Lavatories (Turnstiles) Act**

Outlaws the use of turnstiles to enter Public Toilets.

## **1990 Environmental Protection Act**

A system of integrated pollution control for the disposal of wastes to land, water and air.

## **1995 Disabled Discrimination Act (DDA)**

1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) aims to end the discrimination that many disabled people face. Amongst other things, it outlines the requirements for all bodies to offer equal access to toilets, in terms of locations and accessibility.

## **2003 Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Section 71)**

Makes sexual activity in a public toilet a criminal offence.

## **2006 British Standard (BS) 6465 Part 1**

The "Code of practice for the design of sanitary facilities and scales of provision of sanitary and associated appliances" - sets out recommendations for the level of provision by gender.

## **Building 'M' Regulations**

Outline the dimensions and layout requirements for a toilet to be compliant with the DDA Act. The regulations are slightly flexible and are subject to some local interpretation.

## **2008 Government publish "Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets - A Strategic Guide"**

56 pages of Know-how.

## **2008 Government Paper on the Provision of Public Toilets**

Outlines to Councils the good practice approach to Public Toilets.

## **2008 Sex Discrimination (amendment to regulation)**

Allows Councils to charge for the use of Urinals.

## **2010 Equality and Diversity Act**

To legally protect people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society.

## **OTHER BODIES**

### **Changing Places Campaign**

This campaign asks public places to install Changing Places toilets - fully accessible toilets that include a hoist and adult-sized changing bench.

### **Bog Standard Campaign**

Promoting better toilets for school pupils.

### **British Toilet Association**

Promoting improved facilities across the public toilet/washroom spectrum.



# healthmatic

Healthmatic specialises in the provision of Smarter Public Conveniences, Access Control and Offsite Active Data across the UK and Ireland.

## Healthmatic Ltd

Redman Road  
Porte Marsh Industrial Estate  
Calne Wiltshire SN11 9PL

Tel 01249 822063  
Fax 01249 823140  
Email [sales@healthmatic.com](mailto:sales@healthmatic.com)



[www.healthmatic.com](http://www.healthmatic.com)