



'It's a matter of dignity': an Open Letter to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport in the UK, Lucy Frazer, and Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work, Tom Pursglove.

Dear Secretaries of State,

As a Paralympian, an MBE, a disability access and inclusion campaigner and a disabled British Citizen, I want to bring to your attention a serious injustice that is stopping disabled people and disabled athletes, from enjoying sports in the United Kingdom.

Fewer than 10 per cent of sports venues in the UK currently have a registered Changing Places Toilet* and while legislation means that any new building with capacity for more than 350 people must have a Changing Places toilet, this legislation does not go far enough.

Currently, there is no requirement for existing sports venues to have these facilities and this means that for the 250,000+ disabled people who need them, the choice is a stark one:

- only go out for a short amount of time
- stay at home (feeling isolated)
- face the indignity of having to be changed on a toilet floor (risking infection), or in the back of the car
- risk injury to family or carers as they try to lift the person on and off the floor

This is why I am supporting a trio of disabled sports fans in their petition to get legislation changed www.change.org/p/riseforsport-changing-places-toilets-in-all-uk-sports-venues and ask you to do the same.

Many people make the mistake of thinking that a standard disabled toilet provides ALL disabled people with the additional space needed – this is not the case. More than 250,000 people in the UK require access to a Changing Places Toilet (CPT), as standard accessible toilets are unable to meet their care needs. Not only are they too small to accommodate more than one person, many are not equipped with adequate facilities. CPTs provide a height adjustable changing bench, hoist, privacy screen and extra space to meet the needs of users.

A recent Changing Places survey found that 76.5% of people want to see Changing Places toilets provided at more sports grounds/stadia. Sadly, the lack of facilities means that people avoid visiting. Imagine being a sports fan and not being able to experience going to a game and watching your team play football, athletics rugby, cycling or cricket. Imagine wanting to have a day out at the races and knowing that its impossible due to the lack of facilities, imagine being at a big championship and having your care worker having to change you on a toilet floor. This is something that many young disabled people face each and every day, for disabled adults this is not even an option.

Under the Equality Act 2010, all organisations have a duty to provide accessible goods and services. The provision of accessible toilet facilities is a fundamental and crucial part of inclusive service delivery and their design and management warrant careful attention.

I am calling on you as decision makers to think about all sports - outdoor and indoor venues - to make sport accessible and inclusive to all by providing Changing Places toilets and making sure that we leave no one behind.

This is an urgent issue and needs to be addressed by a change in legislation to ensure that disabled people are not left behind.

I've heard from sports fans about the difference it makes to their lives when the club or team they support has a Changing Places Toilet at their venue. It makes it possible for them to watch their favourite sport live and feel the excitement of being a part of that sporting family. Without these facilities, risking visiting a sports stadium can be a humiliating experience.

Sport is such an important part of society; it has played a huge role in my life, and it is saddening that disabled people face barriers to access, as inhumane as not having access to a toilet facility – both as participants and supporters.

Live sporting events bring many benefits including improving levels of wellbeing, reducing social isolation and feelings of loneliness both as a participant or supporter - disabled people should be able to access sport and enjoy these benefits like non-disabled people do so easily.

I'm requesting a meeting with you both, so that we can look at the current legislation and address this issue with urgency. In 2023, disabled sports participants and supporters should not be faced with the stark choice of staying at home or being changed on a toilet floor.

I look forward to hearing from you so that we can discuss this matter and find a way to ensure that Changing Places toilets are a mandatory requirement in sporting venues.

Yours sincerely

Anne Wafula Strike MBE

*statistic based on information available from the official Changing Places Toilet Map