Gender neutral toilets signage

Design templates and good practice kit for venues & communities

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Part of *Making Your Activism Accessible*

This booklet is part of a series of resources called **Making Your Activism Accessible**, which aims to help activists, campaigners and community organisers make their venues, ethos and practice more accessible, both specifically to disabled people, and more generally.

★ You can find more resources in this series at *ellenmurray.co.uk/accessible*

This resource was produced with the support of many people backing the writer on Patreon. See the Acknowledgements section for more information.

Introduction

It's important that venue be accessible to the communities that need them. One way you can help improve the accessibility of the venues you own or use is to have gender neutral toilets.

Gender neutral toilets allow anyone, of any gender, to use whichever toilet they prefer. They are as safe as, and are often safer than, gender-segregated toilets.

Toilets like these are already commonplace – many schools and other public organisations have gender-neutral facilities in their buildings, and the design trend is now towards neutral facilities by default. The concept is simple enough; you almost certainly have one of these toilets in your own home. There are decades worth of real examples around the world showing that facilities are safer, quicker to use, and more accessible when they don't segregate by gender.

What this guide is for

This booklet is an introduction to how to signpost and mark gender neutral facilities, as this is often an area of contention and confusion among people who want to roll out such facilities.

There is much confusion about what iconography, language and description is best when marking these facilities, so this booklet and associated resources hopes to make it easier for you.

The recommendations and templates provided are the opinion of the author, but are used successfully throughout a number of schools and LGBT/trans community venues in Northern Ireland.

This booklet isn't an in-depth resource on bathroom design best practice.

The benefits

Gender neutral toilets tend to be better and safer for many people within society, and particularly so for transgender people, LGBT people generally, parents and guardians, and disabled people.

Gendered facilities often invoke anxiety for trans people, who may find themselves experiencing harassment or intimidation due to how they are perceived within gender-segregated spaces.

LGBT people often experience harassment and intimidation, but are at higher risk of it within gender-segregated spaces. This is because they may be more obvious to perpetrators in single-gender spaces, and their presence in these spaces may encourage homophobic people to attack them on the basis of their identity or expression.

Parents and guardians often need to accompany their children into public toilets for safety, or to assist them with using the facilities. This can be a problem, especially for adults who are a different gender than their children. Gender neutral facilities remedy this by ensuring all adults and children are specifically welcome.

Disabled people with carers also benefit from gender-neutral facilities, and the provision of sanitary bins in all toilets specifically benefits many disabled men.

Getting your design right

There are a few principles that should be adhered to when building new gender-neutral toilets, or changing existing toilets to gender-neutral.

- ✔ Facilities should be clearly marked as gender-neutral, using appropriate signage

- ✔ It is not OK only make half the facilities neutral – for example, you shouldn't make just the women's facilities gender neutral

- ✔ You should not only make accessible/disabled toilets gender-neutral – these are needed by disabled people

- ✔ Sanitary bins and dispensers should be provided in all facilities

- ✔ Gender neutral facilities should not require a key to open, with the exception of accessible/disabled facilities using a Radar Key or local equivalent

- ✔ Privacy should be centred in design: full-height doors and partitions in cubicles is best

- ✔ If building new facilities, limit the number of urinals

- ✔ Even in facilities not designated as "accessible/disabled", you should incorporate accessible design throughout

Signage

There are many signage options out there for gender neutral facilities, which range from good and clear, to confusing and abstract.

★ Remember, when designing or using signage, if someone can't understand what a facility is or who it's for, that facility is likely to be inaccessible to them.

You may have seen some of the examples below:

All of these signs have issues with non-standard icons and language. Public signage should, where possible, follow international standards for pictographic symbols and icons, intuitive imagery, and use clear, descriptive language.

This is particularly important for people whose native language is not the one of the signage, and for learning/intellectually disabled people.

Gender-neutral signage should also, where possible state more about the facility, particularly suitability for disabled people, and the provision of sanitary bins.

If practical and relevant to the placement of signage, Braille signage should also be available.

A checklist for signage design

When you're designing or using gender neutral toilet signage, you should make sure it fulfils the following:

1. Clear symbols or icons showing a toilet

2. Clear denotation of gender neutrality

3. Clear symbol denoting "accessible" or "suitable for disabled people" where relevant

4. Large text in an easily-read, sans-serif font, kerned properly

5. High contrast between the signage symbols/text and the background

6. Bilingual text, if appropriate

7. Information about sanitary bins or materials availability

TOILET
Leithreas

Gender neutral
Everyone can use this toilet

Accessible
Grab bars, emergency alarm

Sanitary bin
Provided beside the door

3   1   2   7   4   6

Icons & symbols

The icons you use set the scene for how people understand your facilities.

Using a clear icon of an obvious toilet is good for denoting the presence of bathroom facilities.

Using a clear icon of a wheelchair user is good for denoting accessible facilities.

It's important to note that facilities marked as accessible should be suitable for wheelchair users and other disabled people. Many toilets marked as accessible are not suitable for many chair users. If your accessible toilet is small or lacks an adult changing table and hoist, you should provide information on the nearest Changing Places toilets (or local equivalent).

For facilities with urinals, you can also use clear symbols to denote this, using simple pictographs of a typical urinal to denote their presence.

Templates

You can find free downloadable versions of the signage below for printing up to A3 size, plus files for vinyl cutters and other XY plotters online on the author's website at *ellenmurray.co.uk/accessible*.

The bilingual text in these examples is English and, in italics, Irish.

TOILET
Leithreas

✔ **Gender neutral**
Everyone can use this toilet

♿ **Accessible**
Grab bars, emergency alarm

Sanitary bin
Provided beside the door

TOILETS
Leithris

✔ **Gender neutral**
Everyone can use these toilets

ℹ **Stalls only**

Sanitary bins
Provided within the cubicles
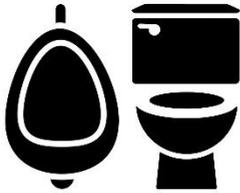
TOILETS
Leithris

✔ **Gender neutral**
Everyone can use these toilets

ℹ **Stall & urinals**

🚮 **Sanitary bin**
Provided within the cubicle

TOILET
Leithreas

✔ **Gender neutral**
Everyone can use this toilet

ℹ **Single stall**

🚮 **Sanitary bin**

Acknowledgements

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