

EDC14D018

Title: GENDER NEUTRAL TOILETS
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Issue: the number and location of gender neutral toilets on campus

Recommendation: That some existing toilets be converted from binary gender status to gender neutral and that inclusion of gender neutral toilets in new builds become part of the standard design principles for the University

Resource Implications: Cost implications are explored in the paper.

Risk Implications:

Equality and Diversity: The paper explores issues for one particular aspect of equality and diversity

Timing of decisions:

Further Information: available from: Holly Staynor (h.staynor@uea.ac.uk)

Also:

- NUS Gender Neutral Toilets briefing:
http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/asset/News/6015/2009_LGBT_GNT_briefing1.pdf
- NUS Education Beyond the Straight and Narrow – LGBT students' experience in higher education <http://www.nus.org.uk/global/lgbt-research.pdf>
- Transgender people need safe rest rooms http://www.huffingtonpost.com/masen-davis/transgender-people-need-safe-restrooms_b_3492067.html

Background: This is the first paper to the Committee on this subject – background included below.

Discussion: see attached paper

1. Background

The Union of UEA Students LGBT+ Officer has been elected on a mandate to campaign for more gender neutral toilets on campus. Indeed, both candidates in the election pledged to campaign for the issue, meaning that 97 per cent of LGBT+ students voted to support gender neutral toilets.

Gender-neutral toilets are toilets and / or bathroom facilities which do not have gendered signage and which do not require the person using them to define into a gender.

Gender-neutral toilets can be used by anyone, regardless of gender, without fear of incident, discrimination or harassment.

Some trans people are not a binary gender, and are not men or women. Having gender-neutral toilets ensures that these people will not be forced to use the wrong toilet and misgender themselves because they do not have a toilet that matches their gender.

Recent research from NUS (National Union of Students) Education Beyond the Straight and Narrow : LGBT students' experience in higher education (2014) highlighted that trans students face difficulties related to the lack of recognition of their identity. The main reasons for trans students dissatisfaction with their institution are: the lack of gender-neutral facilities; the lack of policy to update records; difficulties with security services, and prevalence of transphobia on campus.

At UEA, there are trans students who are early in transition and not in transition who do not feel safe to use the toilets on campus. Trans students are at high risk of urinary disease if they are unable to use the facilities. Due to medication that many trans students take whilst transitioning, they often need to use the toilets more frequently.

The recent NUS research, outlined that over 50% of trans students have admitted to attempting to commit suicide. These statistics are alarming, and highlight how pressing the issue is to ensure trans students feel safe whilst at UEA.

Higher Education institutions with gender neutral toilets

- Staffordshire University Students' Union
- Birmingham University Guild of Students
- University of Manchester Students Union

2. Recommendation

- Any new UEA building plans should include gender neutral toilets
- Change the allocation of gender neutral toilets at UEA, to include at least one gender neutral toilet in every building (in case of arts + science building, one per school)
- Promote the locations of gender neutral toilets clearly on the website and on toilet signs directions around campus (i.e. gender neutral toilets this way)
- Change unisex toilets to gender neutral toilets
- Single occupancy toilets to be changed to gender neutral toilets
- Gender neutral toilets poster campaign to be distributed in:
 - The Library toilets

- All main lecture theatres toilets, including in buildings where many lectures take place.

3. Risk implications

Cost – There are minor cost implications to this, with the main being changing some of the existing signage from gendered to gender neutral.

Usage – Even if the gender neutral toilets installed are only used by a few, this will make a significant difference to their student experience, directly impacting on their mental health, student satisfaction, and retention rates. The number of students affected by an equal opportunities measure has not been a consideration with, for example, disabled students and it should not be a consideration for trans students either.

Religious and faith – We understand that UEA is a Multifaith space for many students. Student should have the choice in which toilets they go in, and therefore having gendered and gender neutral toilets would make UEA accessible to all

Women safety – If women students feel uncomfortable using a gender neutral toilet, there should be gendered toilets available alongside. We would prefer that the creation of gender neutral toilets should not involve reducing the number of women's toilets.

Student segregation – Gender neutral toilets are not 'trans' toilets. They are not specifically for trans people only, and many trans people may wish to use gendered toilets. They are for anyone to use and there is no reason why people using them would be identifies as trans. This should be made clear in any publicity surrounding the introduction of the toilets.

Student safety – any incident outside acceptable standards taking place in gendered neutral toilets, would be dealt with by University Security in the same way they would deal with any incidents elsewhere on campus. Signs could be put up in all toilets to make clear that unacceptable behaviour, whatever its nature, would have serious consequences. All issues surrounding toilets and safety would occur regardless of the existence of gender neutral toilets.