

Quote from Wokingham resident with Crohn's Disease:

"I always plan my day around toilet access – this would involve making sure I go to the toilet before I leave my home and avoiding avoid eating/drinking until I'm back home to reduce the number of times I might need to go.

I have avoided going out in my local area since the pandemic started unless it's a quick trip because so many public toilets were made inaccessible during this time. This of course only added to my anxiety of struggling to find access to a toilet in time and so I felt that the best solution was just to avoid being out for long altogether.

If I do use a public toilet I try to stick to places where I know there are plenty toilets (less queues and not as embarrassing as during flares my stools would often smell) but lack of cleanliness in most public toilets and not knowing where the closest toilets might be, all feed into the worries I have around accessing facilities when needed.

In other areas, on several occasions, I've experienced discrimination for using accessible toilets when desperate to go. I've either been told by other people waiting for the toilet that, "I don't look disabled" or refused access by staff/toilet attendants altogether. Whenever I have needed to access public toilets, I try to use regular toilets [rather than accessible toilets] as the discrimination from previous experiences has made me feel like I need to accommodate others and minimize my own needs purely because my disability is not visible.

Although I have a Crohn's & Colitis UK Can't Wait Card, several restaurants in the local area have refused access unless I'm a paying customer and this has become even more of a concern since Covid.

It would be great if Wokingham Council could display signs to indicate that not all disabilities are visible to avoid having to deal with the discrimination that we do and to reassure those of us with hidden disabilities that we can request for companies to allow us access without needing to be paying customers. The urgency to go can be incredibly embarrassing to deal with when refused access; if they could come up with a solution to avoid this happening then that would really help us overcome the fears, we have around accessing facilities."

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