Public Toilet Access in Wimborne Linked to Growing Isolation Among Older Residents

Monday 2 March, 2026

Concerns about public toilets in Wimborne, including accessibility for older people and ambulant disabled residents, are increasingly being linked to wider issues of confidence, independence and loneliness across Dorset.

The January 2026 consultation, organised by the Allendale Community Centre, received more than 280 responses. Six in ten respondents were aged 65 or over. Dorset has a significantly higher proportion of older residents than the national average, making accessible facilities particularly important for towns like Wimborne.

The findings show:

- **45%** say toilet concerns limit their ability to go out, attend events or socialise.
- **42%** have avoided visiting Wimborne or cut visits short because of worries about availability, cleanliness or accessibility.
- **85%** believe improving facilities would help reduce social isolation.
- **36%** say they have health, mobility, continence or caring needs that make accessible toilets essential.

More than half rated Wimborne's public toilet facilities as poor or very poor.

For many older residents — including ambulant disabled people who use walking sticks, walkers or other mobility aids — the issue is not convenience but confidence.

One respondent aged over 70 said:

"At my age, you plan your day around toilets. If you're not sure you'll find one you can use, you simply stay at home."

Another added:

"I would like to take my mum out in her wheelchair and know she can access a toilet without feeling embarrassed."

The survey suggests that when confidence in basic facilities drops, visits become shorter, events are skipped and social contact reduces — contributing over time to loneliness and withdrawal.

It also revealed that 9% of respondents were unaware that the toilets at the Allendale Community Centre are open to the public seven days a week, even when not attending an activity.

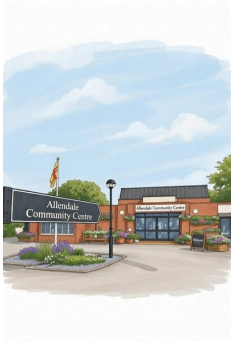
A spokesperson for the Allendale said:

"Something as simple as reliable toilet access can determine whether someone feels able to take part in community life. When confidence falls, people stay at home."

The Centre is now using the findings to support funding applications to refurbish its facilities, focusing on accessibility, dignity and ease of use.

For many elderly residents in Wimborne, suitable public toilets are not a minor detail — they are the difference between staying connected and staying at home.

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Company Contact:

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The Allendale Community Centre

T. 07974917944
E. michelle@theallendale.org
W. http://www.theallendale.org

Additional Contact(s):
Brian Harries, Community CentreManager

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