

Are London's councils ready for ageing?

Age UK London's manifesto for the 2026 local elections





Foreword

London is the fastest ageing major city in the UK.

It is something that is rarely spoken about and we think that needs to change, and fast. I started my new role at Age UK London at the beginning of the year, and it is clear to me that an ageing London presents exciting opportunities. But only if we truly embrace the incredible contributions made by older Londoners, enriching our society and supporting the economy.

We know that London is a complicated city where lots of things can be true all at once. Our own research shows that while many older people in London love the city, it is also a place where far too many older people experience deep poverty, exclusion, and ageism.

A manifesto for councils in UK's fastest ageing city

From social care and accessing support, to the condition of pavements, the services provided by our local councils affect almost every part of our lives. Ahead of the council elections in London on 7th May 2026, Age UK London is publishing this important manifesto. The document is based on consultation with over 750 older Londoners and local London Age UKs who provide invaluable support for older people across the city. We have also incorporated our own research findings alongside contributions from our partners at the London Age Friendly Forum and the Greater London Forum for Older People. We would like to thank everyone that has shaped this manifesto.

Our response must be faster

This manifesto will be sent to election candidates to increase awareness of key issues and action that can make a significant difference. There are nine policy areas with actions that we think councils can take to improve the lives of their older residents. We urge council leaders to read this document and think carefully about how we can all work together to make London a great place to grow older.

We know all of this is against a backdrop of council staff and councillors already working hard under financial pressures to deliver services, so it is more important than ever that we all think about and prioritise what needs to happen to improve older people's lives both now and in the future. We hope this manifesto will go some way to helping to do just that.



Liz Drury
CEO,
Age UK London

Supporting older people with the cost of living

- Work with charities, community centres, GP practices, and other outreach services to raise awareness of the financial support available. Advice must be accessible to residents without internet access and councils should explore 'pop-up' advice shops in town centres and other areas.
- Review the effectiveness of current approaches to increase take-up of Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, council tax reductions, and other financial support. Measure this against effective practice and learning in other boroughs.
- Develop an anti-poverty strategy. Enable older residents with lived experience of financial hardship to fully participate in strategy development to ensure they include actions to address poverty.
- Incentivise local employers to provide age-friendly workplaces by promoting good practice. Collaborate with local employers, adult education providers and Jobcentre Plus offices to improve careers services and training for older job seekers.

Transport

- Commit to protect the Freedom Pass and resist all moves to weaken or cut this vital scheme.
- Support community transport services and work with London Councils, Transport for London, charities, and others to raise awareness among local older people of London Taxicard, Dial-A-Ride and community transport services to ensure all those eligible can access these services.
- Significantly improve meaningful consultation and engagement with older residents well in advance of changes to roads and pavements. Officers and others undertaking Equality Impact Assessments should seek expert advice from older and disabled people's organisations.





Health, social care, and community services

- Assess how additional support could be given to charities and community groups supporting older residents, including those working to deliver meals, run community centres, provide lunch clubs, shopping services, and projects to improve wellbeing and reduce social isolation, including social prescribing.
- Ensure that information and advice about support for the families and carers of older people is accessible. This should include information about what services are available, connections between different services, and support with applications for Carer's Allowance and Attendance Allowance.
- Ensure that commissioners meaningfully involve older people in making informed decisions about their care needs and care planning. It is particularly important that older people are proactively supported to have an active decision-making role at the point of transition into care.
- Fund health prevention teams to ensure older residents can access the support they need to manage their health and prevent avoidable deterioration, targeting those more likely to experience health inequalities.
- Implement [dementia-friendly practices](#) to help reduce discrimination and stigma for people living with dementia, and enable people living with dementia, and unpaid carers, to actively participate in society.

Housing

- Prioritise action to reduce the number of older residents across all tenures living in non-decent homes and in conditions of housing disrepair which impact on their health, safety, and wellbeing.
- Work with accessible housing partners to increase older Londoners' awareness of accessible housing support, including information on how to access aids and adaptations, and Disabled Facilities Grants, so more older Londoners can live safely and well in their homes.
- Effectively resource enforcement teams so that they can provide proactive enforcement of decent homes standards for residents in both the social and private rented sector.
- Protect older private renters by making effective use of available regulatory tools that support enforcement against poor housing in the private rented sector including the introduction of selective property licensing schemes.
- Work with developers and others to ensure new developments include one- and two-bedroom homes suitable for residents interested in moving into a smaller home, and are built to Part M4, Category 2 standards. These properties should be a key part of plans to increase affordable housing, particularly social housing.

Public spaces

- Improve the safety and accessibility of the borough's pavements, including removal of street clutter and discarded waste, introducing better street lighting and more seating areas, and resolving uneven pavement slabs.
- Introduce stronger enforcements against riding and abandoning e-scooters and bikes on pavements.
- Develop a strategy for public toilet provision across the borough as part of the council's public health responsibilities. A named officer responsible for developing and monitoring toilet provision (including a high standard of information about the locations of public toilets) should lead on this strategy.
- Take steps to improve provision of public toilets. This should include maintenance of existing provision and thoughtful consideration to increases in provision linked to a ring-fenced budget line so that the needs of residents and visitors can be met.
- In addition to, but not instead of, public toilets such as those maintained by the council, boroughs might consider developing a Community Toilet Scheme based on meaningful consultation with older residents. Where schemes already exist, work with businesses to strengthen provision.

Communication, information, and digital access

- Ensure that financial support and other local services, such as Blue Badge parking scheme applications, are easily available to people without internet access and all groups protected by the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Along with the provision of well promoted face-to-face and telephone support, councils should provide websites and online systems that are accessible for those with all levels of digital skills.
- Maintain telephone helplines so that those who do not access the internet are still able to access local services and engage actively as citizens. Improve automated systems for phone-based information provision, which many older people find inaccessible.
- Work in partnership with adult education colleges, libraries, and other training providers to ensure that the needs of older residents are included in the delivery of basic digital skills training.
- Reintroduce cash payment options at all council-run car parking facilities and offline options for accessing other facilities, such as leisure centres and libraries.



Welcoming and safe communities

- Support local community centres, cafes, pubs, supermarkets, and other shops to provide age-friendly training for staff. Encourage the sharing of good practice initiatives such as the [‘warm welcome’](#) approach.
- Protect community assets such as libraries, community centres, affordable sports facilities, free-to-use cash machines, post offices, and bank branches that offer face-to-face services, and act as accessible meeting spaces for groups of older people to maintain social connection at little or no cost.
- Work with Safer Neighbourhood Teams, residents’ associations, service providers, and others to tackle crimes targeting older people including doorstep, telephone, and online scams. This should include ‘staying safe’ awareness training and more support for older victims of crime.
- Ensure the views and experiences of older residents are meaningfully reflected in local decision making. This should include proactively making community engagement opportunities available to people without access to the internet.

Working with local charities

- Ensure that the commissioning of services to local charities is conducted collaboratively with those with on the ground expertise, implementing longer-term contracts, to ensure charities can provide sustainable projects.
- Commission local charities fairly on a full cost recovery basis, recognising the full range of costs that charities face when delivering services, including pressures from rises to National Insurance contributions.
- Ensure that the value of contracts awarded are not subject to decline throughout the contract period due to inflation and other changes by committing to annual increases.
- Proactively explore the statutory services where local charities can add value and are able to react to the needs of the community, integrating with health services.

Becoming a more age-friendly borough

- Declare the borough’s ambition to be the best place it can be for its older residents by joining the [Network of Age-friendly Communities](#) and bring the borough into line with the age-friendly communities’ approach. Boroughs that are already members of the Network should work with older residents to develop future plans.
- Appoint a councillor to act as a strong Older Persons’ Champion, who can ensure that the Public Sector Equality Duty with age as a protected characteristic is considered and included in the council’s strategy and planning. The Champion should also have a proactive role in challenging ageism where they see it in the council.



Age UK London is an independent charity dedicated to campaigning on behalf of older Londoners. As an independent charity we rely on grant funders, donors and collaborations to continue our work.

Age UK London works to amplify the voice of older Londoners, working with London's decision makers to ensure the needs of older people are considered. Our work covers poverty, digital inclusion, transport, ageism, health and welfare and access to public toilets.

Age UK London is a local network partner to Age UK, the national charity and the Age UK network who are all united to work together as partners.



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