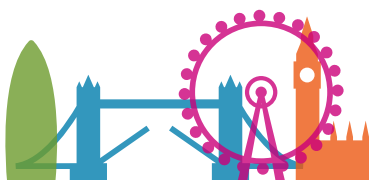


Making London's boroughs age-friendly

Age UK London's
manifesto for
the 2022 local
elections



Photo by Age UK Camden





Foreword

London is an ageing city. People over 50 are the fastest growing demographic and older people make a significant contribution to London as volunteers, employees, carers and active citizens.

These upcoming local elections provide an opportunity for London's boroughs to reflect on both the contribution of their older residents and how they can better meet their needs, as the city recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

As well as creating new and severe issues that drastically affected the quality of life of many older Londoners, the pandemic also exacerbated problems that the city's older population have faced for years. In particular this includes the growing impact of social isolation and digital exclusion.

I cannot write about the pandemic without mentioning the vital work the staff and volunteers of London's 23 local Age UKs provided to support their older communities when they needed them most, and continue to provide. Making London an age-friendly city requires both services such as these, and the sorts of changes by local authorities that we are calling for in this manifesto.

Everyone has a part to play in making London a better place to grow old and together we can make London a truly age-friendly city.



Abigail Wood
Chief Executive
Age UK London



Become an Age-Friendly borough

- Declare the borough's ambition for its older residents of today and tomorrow by joining the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities. Bring the borough into line with the age-friendly communities approach, share learning and work collaboratively with other boroughs and the Mayor of London to develop this concept.
- Maximise engagement with and support for charities and community groups in the borough working with older residents. Wherever possible funding for charities and community groups should reflect a borough's ageing demographics and be offered on a long-term basis so that organisations can plan for the long-term and develop more sustainable support.

Public spaces

- Incorporate age-friendly design principles, such as better lighting and welcoming places to rest, into all aspects of planning. Age-friendly design should make public spaces comfortable for older residents and foster positive connections between people of all ages.
- Make effective use of London Plan policy that ensures new developments include seating and places to rest located in sheltered areas. Planning and design should ensure these spaces are comfortable and feel safe. Street clutter that makes pedestrian areas less accessible should be removed and applications which seek to introduce unnecessary street furniture should be refused.
- 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, including maps) should lead on this strategy.
- Introduce community toilet schemes in or around shopping centres and other places of need based on meaningful consultation with older residents and learning from successful models from across the country. Where schemes already exist, work with businesses and the wider community to strengthen provision.

Health, social care and community services

- Produce a Loneliness Action Plan based on successful models in other local authorities in order to develop a targeted, measurable and joined-up approach to tackling loneliness and social isolation. Where a borough already has a plan, proactively engage with older residents as well as charities and community groups to monitor and drive forward progress.
- Support and work alongside charities and community groups delivering mental health programmes to ensure these services reach older residents.
- Ensure all older residents can access at least one good meal per day by commissioning and funding meals on wheels services, lunch clubs, social prescribing and shopping services from adult social care and healthcare budgets.
- Take steps to ensure that they fully meet the 2014 Care Act duty to ensure that information and advice about support for older people and their families or carers is available and that this sets out details of what services are available, connections between different services, and how accessibility requirements will be met.
- Ensure that commissioners and providers 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.
- Boroughs should fund health prevention teams to ensure all older residents can access the support they need to manage their health and prevent avoidable deterioration. This should include identifying and maximising support for older carers and target those more likely to be affected by health inequalities.
- Take steps to increase engagement with and champion the support of local dementia-support providers.

Communication, information and digital access

- Conduct an accessibility audit of online forms and processes offered by the local authority such as Blue Badge parking scheme applications based on internal monitoring, recorded feedback and engagement with residents, charities and community groups.
- Record and share information with local Age UKs about the online forms and processes identified as causing problems so they can advise on improvements that can be made. Priority should be given to which digital forms or processes people are having the most problems with and therefore having to call the council about instead of completing the task online.
- Maintain phone lines 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.
- Explore partnerships with community broadband providers to install faster broadband across the borough's council housing stock and offer full Wi-Fi across council run sheltered housing schemes.
- 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.

Decent incomes

- Work to strengthen the provision of community advice services to increase uptake of Pension Credit and associated benefits such as Cold Weather Payments and the Warm Homes Discount. Advice must be accessible to residents without internet access and council's should explore 'pop-up' advice shops in town centres and other areas where needs are highest.
- Work with local employers, adult education providers and Jobcentre Plus offices to improve careers services and other training for older job seekers.
- Incentivise local employers to provide age-friendly work places by promoting good practice. This should include championing schemes such as the London Healthy Workplace Award and the aligned Good Work Standard which provide a framework to help employers build healthy work environments such as flexible hours for older workers with caring responsibilities.

Welcoming and safe communities

- 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.
- 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 and offer support for cafes and other venues interested in becoming community hubs.
- Work with businesses, community and faith groups, and adult education providers to encourage availability of accessible meeting spaces, which can be accessed by groups of older people at little or no cost.
- Protect community assets such as free-to-use cash machines, libraries, post offices and bank branches that offer face-to-face services.
- Ensure the views and experiences of older residents are meaningfully reflected in local-decision making and underpin all aspects of policy making. Community engagement opportunities must be as inclusive as possible and public consultations must not be online only.

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.
- Support older residents living in all housing tenures to live well and safely in their homes with better access to aids and adaptations; impartial housing information and advice; and home improvement support services.
- 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. These properties should be a key part of plans to significantly increasing affordable housing in the borough.

Transport

- Significantly improve consultation, engagement and communications 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 people's organisations and disabled people's organisations.
- Strengthen enforcement against illegal cycling and e-scooter riding on pavements and against those responsible for pavement obstructions.
- 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.
- Work with London Councils and others to protect current and future Freedom Pass holders from any changes to weaken this vital concession.



Contact us:
campaigns@ageuklondon.org.uk
ageuk.org.uk/london

Registered charity number 1092198. Age UK London is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales number 4407861.