

The lack of clean, accessible public toilets traps people at home and prevents them from getting out and about. It affects more of us than you might imagine. In fact one in five get out of the house much less often than they would like because of lack of public or available toilets. Research with older Londoners by Age UK London has shown that over half [52%] reduce the amount they drink before going to some places, and for older people and many with disabilities this can lead to dehydration and serious health consequences. [[Royal Society of Public Health report](#), 2019]

The Ageing Well Partnership Board in Haringey identified isolation and loneliness for people over 50 as a major factor which preventive health and wellbeing measures should address. Research has demonstrated that confinement to home as a consequence of lack of known, available, safe and accessible toilets contributes significantly to that isolation.

We are here today to ask Haringey Council to undo this “loo leash” [as it is called] and tackle the “loo deserts” in the borough.

About Loos for Haringey

Established in 2022, but coalescing work which several partners have been doing for a few years, and with impetus from Age UK London, Loos For Haringey are a group of Haringey residents concerned about the poor provision of public toilets in Haringey. Group members represent the following organisations: Haringey Over 50s Forum, Age UK London, The Toilet Manifesto for London Group, Friends of Chestnuts Park, and Hornsey Pensioners Action Group.

What we are asking for?

1. **A meeting with a nominated Cabinet Member to discuss our serious concerns.**
2. **London Borough of Haringey to develop and implement a strategy for improving the provision of public toilets in the borough, and to report early in 2023-24 financial year on interim improvements.**

Toilet strategies provide an important framework for local authorities to coordinate the actions needed to improve public toilet provision locally. Public toilet provision can feature in the plans of many different council departments and strategies can offer a more joined-up approach for auditing and evaluating current provision, listening to residents and making decisions based on population needs. **It is recommended that a named officer has the responsibility to lead on and report on the strategy.**

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Improving public toilet provision in Haringey.
February 2022**



Toilet strategies are a key part of the [Toilet Manifesto for London](#), which was published in 2020. The Council should have a strategy for toilet provision with clear accountability setting out who is responsible for design, accessibility, maintenance and signage. The strategy should set out the responsibility of the Parks department in relation to this. At present, despite its responsibility to people with a health need arising from protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty, Haringey has no strategy, and no identified linkage between departments.

Loos for Haringey have interacted with LBH officers and met positive responses from the Ageing Well Partnership Board, but we are still awaiting a joined-up approach from the Council. We have pointed out particular areas of 'shut off' loos [e.g. Turnpike Lane] and poor condition, and are currently seeking a resolution to the lack of toilets at Tottenham Hale Retail Park.

Recommendations for a Haringey Toilet Strategy

A good toilet strategy should include:

- Meaningful ongoing community engagement with residents. This should be a diverse group, including older residents, representative of the wider community. It is important that meaningful consultation is inclusive and that people without the internet are included.
- A needs assessment based on mapping existing toilets available for public use, identifying gaps by working with communities and other partners to identify solutions.
- An action plan to review and improve public information about provision.
- Consideration should be given to the quality of signage, maps, website information, and the use of newsletters, media, posters and leaflets to raise awareness about toilet locations.
- Aim to mainstream public toilet provision into strategic policy such as urban planning policy.
- A strategy must incorporate all aspects of the public realm including parks. Parks in Haringey need more toilets with better access. Many existing toilets in parks will need capital investment to improve their standard and accessibility. There must be proper signage, informative and reliable. For every well-run facility like those in Priory Park there are failing facilities like those in Markfield Park. The franchising arrangements through which cafes take responsibility for cleaning and maintenance should be consistent and realistic in terms of the staff resources available. In somewhere as busy as Finsbury Park such responsibilities would surely be better devolved to Veolia. There should then be an adequate budget for repairs signed off by Cabinet. In Chestnuts Park, where the public toilets are essentially in the park but not

managed by Parks, effective line management should immediately be established.

- Where provision in the borough is positive such as in Wood Green town centre, that should be a benchmark for elsewhere, and where there are 'toilet deserts' such as in North Tottenham and towards Archway, that should be addressed.

The Welsh Government has produced guidance to support local authorities in Wales to develop and implement toilet strategies. The guidance includes 'do's and don'ts'; a flowchart outlining the process for developing and implementing a toilet strategy; and advice on taking a long-term approach.

Why improving public toilet provision matters

- Since 2016 there had been a 19% decrease in the number of public toilets in the UK.
- As many as one in five of us avoid leaving home as much as we could like because of concerns about a lack of available toilets – what is known as the 'loo leash'.
- Nearly half (43%) of those of us with medical conditions requiring more frequent toilet use experience this loo leash.
- Only around 33% of public toilets in London are accessible to disabled people.
- Last summer Age UK London carried out a survey of older Londoners to underpin their campaign and to which 624 people responded.
- 81% said public toilets in the borough where they live are bad.
- 56% said there was a problem with toilets in Parks.
- The highest priority - identified by 46% of respondents) was cleanliness.

The benefits of improving public toilet provision in Haringey

- **People spend more time in Haringey shopping areas:** In a survey of 600 older Londoners [81%](#) said that they would be more likely to visit shops, cafes and businesses if public toilet provision were better. The [International Longevity Centre](#) have argued that tackling the barriers to older people's spending could add 2% (or £47 billion) to UK GDP a year by 2040.
- **Reducing social isolation in Haringey:** As many as [one in five](#) of us avoid leaving home as much as they would like because of concerns about a lack of available toilets – what is known as the 'loo leash'. This can lead to and exacerbate social isolation, which impacts communities and can lead to greater pressures on health and social care.

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- **Tackle a cause of ill health in Haringey:** From less active lifestyles to dehydration because of reduced intake of fluids, poor provision of public toilets has a significant impact on health and wellbeing. The lack of public toilets also disproportionately affects people with existing ill health.

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