

Community Toilet Schemes in London

Research by Margit Physant MSc, May 2022

Summary

The purpose of this research was to explore the range and characteristics of Community Toilets Schemes (CTS) in London with view to identify best practice for sharing.

Information was gathered from local borough websites, telephone interviews and written communication with local officials.

The research identified eleven active CTS in London each with between six and 70 participants. The schemes operated along fairly similar lines:

Participating venues were paid between £500 and £1,200 per year for making their toilets available to the general public without them having to purchase anything. Most boroughs had a sliding scale of fees with higher rates being paid according to the facilities on offer – typically accessible toilet – or according to the number of days a week the venue was open.

Members of the public can find a Community Toilet (CT) using a list or map on the relevant borough website and recognise it by a sticker in the window of participating venues.

Not enough information was obtained to ascertain 'best' – or even 'good' - practice.

Introduction

Local authorities are responsible for the provision of public toilets. Directly managing public toilets is very costly so CTS can be an attractive alternative. A Community Toilet Scheme refers to the arrangement in which private businesses allow their toilet facilities to be used by non-customers. They are usually paid a fee by the local authority.

The Department for Communities and Local Government produced guidance in 2008 (1) which probably still has relevance and the campaign group Public Toilets UK has produced a briefing (2).

Research questions

The purpose of this research was to explore the range and characteristics of CTS in London with a view to sharing best practice with London boroughs. The research set out to answer the following questions:

1. How does the CTS operate?
2. How many venues are currently participating?
3. How are participants recruited?
4. What are the criteria for inclusion?
5. How much are they paid and how?
6. What mechanisms are in place for monitoring and review?
7. How can members of the public find a CT?

Community Toilet Schemes in London

Research by Margit Physant MSc, May 2022

Methodology

Fifteen London Boroughs indicated on their websites that they had a CTS in place.

An email was sent in early March 2022 to the contacts given for the respective CTS explaining the purpose of the research and requesting a brief interview with an official by phone. Three boroughs – Enfield, Newham and Richmond – responded and interviews were conducted.

In view of the poor response, a follow-up email was sent two weeks later to the remaining ones, asking for answers via email to specific questions:

1. How much are participants paid?
2. What are your criteria for participation and the various levels of payment?
3. How do you collect feedback from the public?

Email responses were received from Barnet, Camden, City of London, and Waltham Forest.

It also came to light that four other boroughs are at some stage of developing a Scheme or reviewing a previously active CTS.

Findings

We found that one in three London Boroughs (11) had an active CTS. The number of participants in the Schemes ranged from six to 70. (See appendix A).

Payment

Participating venues were paid between £500 and £1,200 per year. Most CTS had a scale of payment with higher rates paid for *either* more facilities such as accessible toilets or baby-changing *or* venues that were open every day. One CTS include local authority premises albeit at a lower rate.

Examples of annual payment from various CTS

- Single unisex: £550, £800.
- Separate male £400 and separate female £400.
- Both male and female: £850.
- Multiple unisex toilets or baby changing: £1000.
- Wheelchair accessible: £1000, £1200.
- If the toilet is accessible: additional £100.
- If the toilet allows baby-changing: additional £100.
- Council premises: max £200 regardless of facilities.
- Up to £750 depending on how many days/week the venue is open
- £1000 if open 7 days/week, otherwise £800.

Community Toilet Schemes in London

Research by Margit Physant MSc, May 2022

Management

- In most boroughs local premises are invited to apply to participate and are approved unless there is already another CT in the locality.
- Some boroughs carried out an annual inspection of participating venues.
- Some proactively gather service-user feedback for example by using 'mystery shoppers'.
- Premises that serve food are subject to periodic inspections which include toilets.

Information for the public

A range of methods were used to help members of the public locate a CT.

- A list of addresses for CTs on the council website with or without additional information such as opening hours and details of accessibility;
- A map of the borough indicating the location of CTs. Some simply provide a link to the [Great British Public Toilet Map](#).
- Street signs in the locality with directions to the nearest CT.
- Window stickers at the participating premises such as these from Enfield CTS:



© London Borough of Enfield

Conclusion

There appears to be little variation in the CTS currently operating in London.

We cannot deduce what is 'good' practice from this research, only practice, as there was little information about monitoring or evaluation.

May 2022
Margit Physant, MSc
Email: margitphysant@yahoo.co.uk

References

- (1) Communities and Local Government (2008) *Improving Public Access to Toilets: Guidance on Community Toilet Schemes*. [Link](#) to document.
- (2) Public Toilets UK briefing on CTS. [Link](#) to document.

Community Toilet Schemes in London

Research by Margit Physant MSc, May 2022

Appendix A: CTS in London

Borough	Number of Participants	Link to CTS
Barnet	12	Barnet community toilets Barnet Council
Bromley	40	Community toilet scheme Community and public toilets London Borough of Bromley
Camden	7	Public toilets - Camden Council
City of London	65	Community Toilet Scheme (CTS) - City of London
Ealing	6	Community toilet scheme Public toilets Ealing Council
Enfield	19	Community toilet scheme - Enfield Council
Lambeth		Community toilet scheme - Find a public toilet Lambeth Council
Merton	6	Community Toilet Scheme (merton.gov.uk)
Newham	14	Public toilets in Newham – Newham Council
Richmond	70	Community Toilet Scheme - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Waltham Forest	38	https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/neighbourhoods/public-toilets