

Evidence for revitalising Lambeth's Community Toilet Scheme – Loos for Lambeth

About Loos for Lambeth

Loos for Lambeth is a local group of residents, supported by Age UK London, campaigning to improve public toilet provision in the borough to make it easier for people to get out and about and live the lives they want to live. Currently, too many people do not leave their homes as much as they would like because they are anxious about not being able to find a toilet.

We want the council to take action to improve public toilet provision in the borough and part of this is to improve Lambeth's existing Community Toilet Scheme.



What are the benefits of a Community Toilet Scheme and public toilets?

Good provision of public toilets is a hallmark to a civilised and welcoming place to be. Many Londoners do not leave their homes as often as they would like for fear about not finding a decent toilet.

Public toilet provision is a matter of public health and inclusion for all members of society. Good quality public toilet provision can significantly improve people's lives, and a Community Toilet Scheme can play an important part of provision when implemented among other projects.

The benefits of a [Community Toilet Scheme](#) include:

- ☑ More toilets in the borough mean more people can confidently maintain an active lifestyle and enjoy the local environment
- ☑ Strengthened community ties between the council and local businesses
- ☑ Supporting broader health and inclusion goals, enhancing the accessibility of the borough
- ☑ Cost-effective, with a financial and reputational benefit to establishments

Public Sector Equality Duty

As you know, the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share and people who do not share a relevant protected characteristic. This includes:

- removing or minimising the disadvantages suffered by people due to their relevant protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the different needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic;
- encouraging participation in public life or any other activity by underrepresented groups;
- and taking steps to meet the needs of disabled persons

How can Lambeth's Community Toilet Scheme work towards fulfilling the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements? Below are some examples:

Age

With residents in Lambeth aged 50 and over now accounting for 25% of Lambeth's population, Lambeth Council's commitment to being an age-friendly borough is more important than ever.

Increasing the availability of public toilets were identified as one of the elements on how Lambeth could be a better place to grow older in the [Age-Friendly Action Plan 2024-2027 engagement work](#).

Research by Age UK London (2022) found 4 in 5 survey respondents said they wouldn't be confident going into a shop/café and asking to use their toilets if the business was not part of a CTS, whilst 3 in 4 respondents said they would feel confident asking to use a toilet in a business they knew to be part of a CTS. Improving Lambeth's Community Toilet Scheme will be an important step towards ensuring older people can move about Lambeth with ease.

Disability

A range of disabilities affect the need for toilets, including disabilities that affect mobility, neurological conditions such as Parkinson's Disease, and bowel and bladder conditions such as Crohn's Disease.

[Euan's Guide Access Survey \(2024\)](#) found that 77% of respondents avoided going somewhere because they couldn't find information about an accessible toilet. 73% of survey respondents said they have come across an accessible toilet that they've been unable to use; the most common problems with accessible toilets were toilets being dirty (69%) or locked (65%).

Work needs to be done to ensure Lambeth's Community Toilet Scheme provides enough accessible toilets.

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnant people often need to use the toilet more frequently and later need nappy-changing facilities for their children.

Lambeth needs more Community Toilets with baby-changing facilities to be inclusive.

"As I get older I rely more and more on public toilets. I cannot risk having a cup of coffee unless I can be sure, I will be able to get to a toilet in the next half an hour."

- Female in her 70s in Lambeth

"Many people, myself included, are on diuretic medication that necessitate frequent visits to the loo. Other conditions such as Crohn's and Colitis also require nearby conveniences."

I have needed to go to the loo in Brixton and only found Morley's toilet on the second floor available, as the library has limited opening hours. Morley's (thank goodness for them) is great, but if the lift is not working, as it wasn't recently, the stairs are a huge hurdle."

Access to facilities allows people with chronic health conditions and also families with young children to live their lives, access education, work, and social activities without fear of discrimination or needing to stay home." - Tina Wakefield, Loos for Lambeth member

How can BIDs get involved?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are business-owned and business-led, focussed on improving the trading environment for businesses, through improved promotion, safer streets, strengthening resilience, and initiatives and incentives to improve business-to-business opportunities.

There are seven BIDs in Lambeth. Many focus on improving the public realm, making the area somewhere pleasant to visit and work in. Cleaning and greening are often mentioned but there is little reference to public toilets in any of the BIDs' publicity.

Whilst businesses have their own facilities which staff and visitors can use, we believe there is an opportunity to encourage BIDs to consider how they can provide Community Toilets in each area. Businesses who let customers use their toilets are well known, with visits to use a toilet also becoming a surprising opportunity to make a purchase or to notice services that an individual might need in the future.

"I take groups of older people on outings around London and I'm acutely aware of the need to find toilet stops. There are some areas I avoid as I haven't been able to find public toilets. But it is not only older people. I live close to Vauxhall BID and have been asked twice by heavily pregnant ladies if there is a public toilet nearby – there is no consistently open female toilet near the busy train and underground rail interchange, and a sign at the tube station telling users that there is no public toilet here. Previously I have commented to the Vauxhall BID team but received no response to my message."

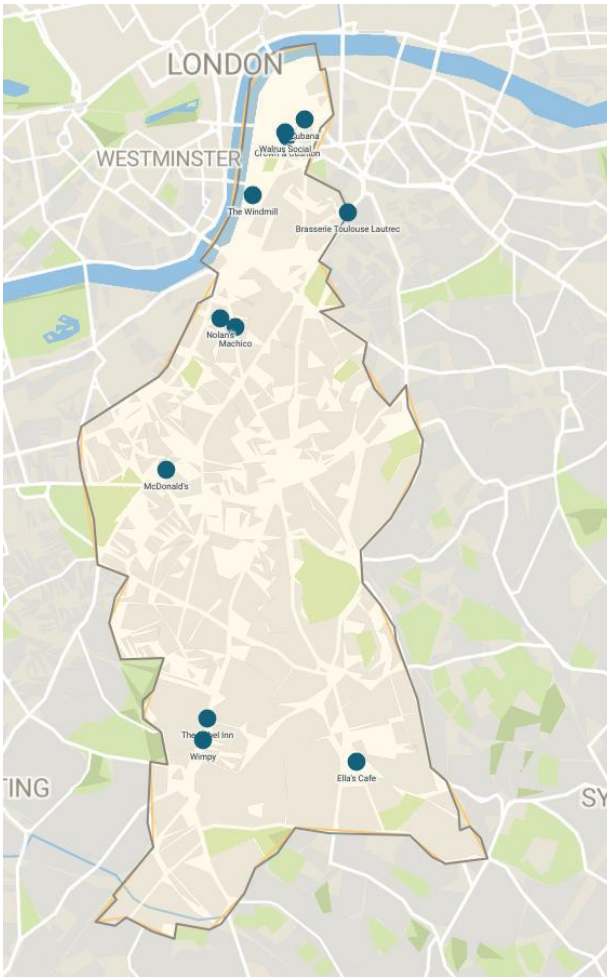
- Jill Gregson, Loos for Lambeth member

What needs to be improved for Lambeth's Community Toilet Scheme to be successful?

In Spring 2025, Loos for Lambeth conducted an audit of the 13 establishments listed as part of Lambeth's Community Toilet Scheme.

In our audit, we found:

- Four establishments listed were either no longer part of the scheme or were no longer in business.
- Amongst the sites, there were varying opening hours, leaving gaps in provision at certain times.
- Whilst most of the toilets visited were adequately clean, there were not enough establishments with dedicated accessible facilities.
- Most establishments that we visited gave a warm reception to anyone needing to use the toilets, but there is a significant lack of advertisement at most sites about them participating in the scheme, contributing to a lack of awareness about the scheme amongst the general public.
- There are areas in Lambeth with no Community Toilets, creating 'loo deserts' (overleaf).



It is clear there are some improvements needed to be made to Lambeth's Community Toilet Scheme. Loos for Lambeth are calling for:

- **Recruitment of more establishments to the scheme**, prioritising those with accessible toilets and sites where there are fewer Community Toilets already, alongside diversifying the range of establishments' opening hours.
- **Better advertisement and awareness of the scheme**, including clear signage in participating establishments, mapping tools both online and offline, and outreach to local communities and noticeboards (e.g. libraries, community centres).
- **Active management of the scheme by Lambeth Council**, including monitoring of participating establishments to ensure they are maintaining their facilities and appropriately advertising.

Examples of Community Toilet Schemes in other boroughs

Richmond upon Thames: Richmond upon Thames marked the 20th anniversary of their CTS in 2024 by expanding the number of participating locations to over 70. The expansion was based on a review of the Scheme following the COVID-19 pandemic and the Scheme includes an [interactive map](#) online and pocket-size printed maps are available to collect from a variety of community locations.



Lewisham: Lewisham Council supports community organisation, [Lewisham Local](#), to deliver one of the largest schemes in London with theatres, cafes, pubs and many more venue types participating. To raise awareness of the Scheme, a Loowisham Community Toilet of the Year Competition launched in 2023. As well as a 'top 20 loos', there are several award categories, including 'most fascinating toilet' and 'prettiest toilet'.

