

MAYOR OF LONDON

Caroline Russell AM

Chair

London Assembly Health Committee

C/o Daniel.Tattersall@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA191121-8263

Date: 17 January 2022


Dear Caroline,

Thank you very much for sharing the London Assembly Health Committee's recently published report into public toilet provision across London. I welcome the work that the Committee has done in this area. I have responded to each of the report recommendations in the annex attached, and please accept my apologies for the delay.

Public toilets are a vital facility for everyone, giving Londoners and visitors to our city the confidence to move around and spend time in public spaces. A lack of easy access to suitable toilet facilities is more than just an inconvenience – it can have serious implications for health and can limit people's ability to go about their daily lives as they would choose. No one should be worried about whether or not they can find a toilet that meets their needs when they are out and about in London.

I will continue to promote the provision of free, publicly accessible toilets in our city, and I would like to reassure the Committee of my commitment to doing everything within my power to support this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

MAYOR OF LONDON

Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Health Committee's report on improving public toilet provision in London

Recommendation 1

The government should make the provision of public toilets a statutory duty for local authorities, and the Mayor should be leading on this issue for London, lobbying with London Councils for the provision of ringfenced funding to enable this to be achieved.

Any decision about imposing a statutory duty is a matter for the Government. The Mayor will ask his officers to initiate discussions with colleagues in London Councils, to explore how local authorities could be best supported in their efforts to enhance public toilet provision.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor and London Councils should provide an opportunity for local authorities to share best practice on their community toilet schemes, including how to run them successfully and how to ensure that information and directions about such schemes are clear, consistent and accessible.

The Mayor supports the principle of enabling local authorities to share best practice in this area. The Mayor will ask his officers to discuss with colleagues at London Councils as to how this might be best facilitated.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should engage with large businesses and retail chains on the high street, to encourage them to open their toilets to the public and advertise that they are doing so.

The Mayor's Good Growth investment is creating or refurbishing more than 250 toilet units, including more than 180 that are fully accessible, across London; and Transport for London (TfL) is also improving its toilet provision.

The London Plan Policy S6 requires large-scale developments that are open to the public – such as shopping centres or large community spaces – and those where new, large-scale public realm is created, to provide free, publicly accessible toilets suitable for a range of users.

In respect of high street access, the Mayor supports borough community toilet schemes that promote access to toilets on commercial and retail premises by members of the public; and will continue to work with boroughs, TfL and businesses to provide inclusive and accessible toilet services in London.

Recommendation 4

To make current public toilets more financially viable, and to stimulate provision of new public toilets, the Mayor should convene local authorities and prospective commercial partners to explore innovative practice with regards to advertising and broader commercial opportunities in public toilets.

The Mayor will ask his officers to explore what support they can offer in facilitating such discussions between local authorities and commercial partners.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Recommendation 5

TfL should share, in a public forum, the results of their current review of toilet provision across the network and any actions that will be taken as a result of the findings.

TfL is currently in the process of compiling the findings of its audit of London Underground facilities, which included assessing the general condition of toilets and any restricted opening hours that were in place. Some of this information, such as opening hours and precise locations within stations, will be incorporated into TfL's published customer information, although a timescale for this is yet to be agreed. My officers will keep the Committee informed of progress.

As a result of the findings, TfL has already identified low-cost improvements to the general presentation of some toilets – for example, redecoration. These improvements will enhance the experience of customers using these facilities. TfL's ability to progress this work is contingent on the availability of future funding.

Recommendation 6

TfL should create an action plan for how they will enable the wider public, not just paying passengers, to access toilets situated behind the barrier in stations.

TfL will continue to expect its staff to allow people through the barrier to use toilets wherever possible. In some circumstances this might not be possible, such as if they are the only staff member in the station and the toilet is remote from the ticket barrier. In this case, TfL expects staff to offer useful information to customers about where the nearest alternative toilets can be found.

TfL will be undertaking engagement with operational colleagues about supporting customers who need toilet facilities when they are travelling. TfL is also providing staff with information on more general actions they can take to support people who may need to access station toilets. This includes ensuring toilets are operating as they are meant to, allowing customers access on request at times when toilets are locked, and, when requested, allowing people through the barrier to use toilets even if they are not travelling. Staff are also being asked to stay informed regarding the facilities that might be available locally.

It should be noted that TfL's current guidance for new facilities is that they should be located in the ticket hall after the barrier, as it means staff are better able to monitor toilets. In turn, this helps to ensure facilities remain in a better condition for all users. Technology-based solutions to permit access to toilets for the wider public (i.e. non-customers) are cost-prohibitive.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor, local authorities and TfL should all improve the quantity and quality of information on how to find the types of publicly accessible toilets that Londoners require, with the information provided in a range of formats that suit the diverse needs of Londoners.

TfL is investigating options for improving toilet signage to make it more prominent and obvious to customers looking for facilities. This includes the use of bolder pictograms and including messaging about hidden disabilities where appropriate. TfL is also developing a set of more detailed principles for toilet signage, which will ensure that customers are more easily able to locate toilets within stations.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Once the information obtained through TfL's audit of London Underground toilets is finalised, the intention is to publish more comprehensive information about the location of toilets within stations, as well as opening hours at stations where these are not available throughout the full traffic day. This will allow customers to plan their journeys more effectively.

Information about toilets is currently available in several formats, including within the TfL Go app and in the printable online toilet map. Information about the locations of accessible toilets is also published in the Step-free Tube Guide, which is available both online and as a printed map. TfL is also exploring options for enhanced customer information about toilets, including incorporating additional detail into TfL Go.

Some local authorities provide open data regarding existing public toilets and community toilet schemes. The Mayor would encourage all local authorities to make this kind of information publicly available. There is also a range of existing online resources (for example, the Great British Toilet Map, AccessAble; Flushed; Toilet Finder; Open Lavs and Loocations.com (formerly Lockdown Loos), which are useful sources of information for the public.

Recommendation 8

TfL should add an easy-to-find toilet map on their TfL Go app, ensure it is available in accessible formats and contains accurate data on facilities and opening times.

TfL's toilet map data is already integrated in TfL Go. The app currently provides information at the station level for: whether there are toilets and baby changing facilities present; the gender for the toilets, if applicable; whether toilets are located inside or outside the ticket gate line, and whether facilities are managed by TfL or not.

As mentioned previously, TfL is investigating options for enhanced customer information about toilets, including incorporating additional opening hours detail into TfL Go. However, timescales for this are not yet agreed.

Recommendation 9

TfL should meet with disability charities including Crohn's and Colitis UK, and Changing Places, to review their provision for people with disabilities and people with long-term health conditions and join the "not every disability is visible" campaign.

TfL is always open to opportunities to collaborate with external organisations. Officers have had recent meetings with Crohn's and Colitis UK, who are positive about TfL's initiatives to improve access to toilets across the network. TfL also supported their recent awareness week (1-7 December 2021) by publishing a blogpost for staff, which highlighted the experiences of a customer with these conditions using the network.

TfL has developed new signage for customers that includes the message that not all disabilities are visible. This has already been installed at Nine Elms and Battersea Power Station, which opened as part of the Northern line extension. All TfL's information for staff highlights that there may be a number of reasons why customers require quick access to toilets when out and about and that many of these disabilities may not be visible or obvious.

TfL has been working with Changing Places to develop proposals for a facility at Colindale station when construction of the proposed new ticket hall is complete. A Changing Places toilet is also opening at Ealing Broadway station.

MAYOR OF LONDON

London Underground has rewritten its requirements for projects to provide a much stronger instruction around toilet provision when new station infrastructure is constructed. This will include considering the provision of Changing Places toilets. TfL is also working to develop a variation on a Changing Places toilet that will also be suitable for other users.

Recommendation 10

Each local authority should produce a toilet strategy based on population need and current provision.

The decision as to whether to produce a local toilet strategy is a matter for each local authority. The Mayor will ask his officers to raise this issue with colleagues at London Councils, as part of their wider discussions on this topic.

Recommendation 11

Using the principles of the Health Inequalities Strategy, the Mayor should review the health inequalities implications of current public toilet provision in London, and use that analysis to help drive improvements in provision with partner organisations.

Londoners have diverse needs when it comes to toilet provision. Improving the availability of suitable and accessible toilet facilities plays a role in addressing inequalities, while being of benefit to all.

As above, the London Plan Policy S6 requires large-scale developments that are open to the public to provide and secure the future management of free, publicly accessible toilets suitable for a range of users. This and other health and wellbeing provisions from the London Plan have been included in the newly published Health Inequalities Strategy Implementation Plan, reflecting the Mayor's commitment to using every power at his disposal to tackle health inequalities.

The Mayor will ask his officers to speak to colleagues in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to find out what data exists about public toilet provision and its impact on health inequalities, and to explore how such data might be used to support local decision making around public toilet provision.

Recommendation 12

The Mayor and London Councils should work with local authorities to review the quality of accessible toilets to ensure they are genuinely accessible for Londoners with all disabilities

The Mayor's Good Growth investment is creating or refurbishing more than 180 fully accessible toilets across London, which will contribute towards improving the quality and availability of accessible public toilets across the city.

The Mayor will ask his officers to raise this issue with colleagues at London Councils as part of their wider discussions.